

BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKSTAN:  
REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

BY

CARMUHAMMED ZARDIHAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

AUGUST 2000

ANKARA

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2000



to my nephew Dinmuhammed Z.

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**Approved by the Institute of Economic and Social Sciences**

*A.2. Karsan*

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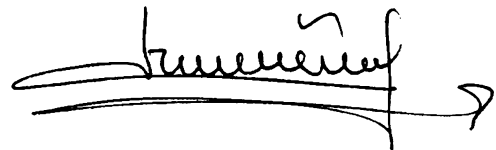
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## ABSTRACT

In this present work, I attempt to present the peculiar way of nation-building in the Republic of Kazakhstan since its independence in December 1991 and its reflection in the main trends of the republic's foreign policy. While doing this, I also emphasize the republic's historical background, especially its long-lasting suffering from Tsarist colonial rule, which later was replaced by more severe Soviet rule. I dwell on the past and current demographic situation in the republic, which beyond doubt plays one of the most important roles in the formation and commitment of the republic's policy. In my thesis, I evaluate the reasons and circumstances that force the republic to commit a 'concessive' policy towards Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries. Besides historical and political peculiarities, I also consider the economic aspects of the republic's foreign policy, which to a great extent is based on exploring practical ways of exporting Caspian oil and gas.



## ÖZET

İşbu tezde Kazakistan Cumhuriyetinin 1991 Aralık ayında kazandığı bağımsızlıktan beri sürdürdüğü milli yapılanma siyasetinin bu ülkeye has özellikler ve o siyasetinin ülkenin temel dış politika yönelişindeki yansımaları üzerinde durulmaktadır. Konunun anlatımı sırasında ülkenin tarihsel geçmişi, ve özellikle Kazak halkının asırlar boyunca mağruz kaldığı sömürgeci Çarlık dönemi ve daha sonra onun yerini alacak olan ve şüphesiz daha da zalim olan Sovyet döneminin bıraktığı izleri ele alınmaktadır. Kazakistan'ın tarihi "mirası" olan ve emsali kolay bulunamayacak olan demografik dengesizlik günümüzün Kazak dış politikasını yönlendiren en temel etkenlerden birisidir.

Bu tezimde üzerinde durulan konulardan biri de Kazakistan'ı Rusya Federasyonu'na ve diğer BDT devletlerine karşı "tavizci" taraf olmaya zorlayan sebepler ve durumlar ve onların değerlendirilmesidir. Kazakistan'ın tarihsel ve siyasi özellikler dışında ülkenin dış politikasının altında yatan iktisadi ilişkiler ve özellikle bu ülke için en hayati meselelerden biri olan Hazar Deniz petrollerinin üretimi ve dünya piyasasına nakli konuları da ele alınmıştır.

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I would like to thank Assistant Professor Ömer Faruk Gençkaya and Assistant Professor Hasan Ünal for the honour they did to me to participate in my jury and for their precious suggestions and corrections on the draft of my thesis.

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## Introduction

In the early months after achieving independence in December 1991 the situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan could easily be compared to a state devastated by war: the republic had no military establishment, national bank and currency, embassies abroad, international contacts, and, what is most important, it had no experience in independent state-building and policy-making. There was no coordination between the sectors of its own economy: while former Union-wide economic links had already collapsed, the republic's economic transactions became completely paralyzed.

The Russian domination of the Kazaks began in 1726, when Abulhayr Khan of the *Kişi Jüz* (Small Horde) Kazaks requested Russian protection upon the severe invasion of Jungars, nomadic tribes from the Mongol stock, from the East; later in 1740, the same appeal was made by the khans of *Orta Jüz* (Middle Horde), Ablay and Abulmambet.<sup>1</sup> The Russian domination over the Kazak lands was followed by a severe policy of colonization of the native population bolstered by immigration of the Slavs and administrative division into *guberniyas* and *oblasts*, which did not correspond to the delineation of the traditional grazing areas of Kazaks. According to the all-Russian census of 1897, the Kazak (*Kirghiz*)<sup>2</sup> steppes was inhabited by 4,147,800 people, 3,392,000 of whom (or 81.7%) were Kazaks; by 1914, the total population reached 5,910,000, where Kazaks amounted to 3,845,200 (65.1%).<sup>3</sup>

In the Russian period of Kazak history, several bitter uprisings occurred in the Kazak steppe when the Kazaks stood up against Russian troops and administration. The Kazaks, especially those of the Small Horde, were involved in the revolt of Yemelyan

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<sup>1</sup> N.A. Khalfin, *Rossia i khanstva Sredney Azii*, Moscow, 1974, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Early Russian travellers confused the Kazakhs with the Kirghiz and until the mid-1920 the Kazaks were known as Kirghz-Kaisak or simply as Kirghiz while the modern Kirghiz were known as Kara-Kirghiz.

<sup>3</sup> A.K. Akishev *et al.* (eds.), *Istoriya Kazakhstana s drevneyshih vremen do nashih dney*, Almaty, 1993 (hereafter *Istoriya Kazakhstana*), p. 260.

Pugachev (1773-1774), the greatest and most violent peasant revolt in Tsarist history.<sup>4</sup> From 1837 and until 1846, Kenesary Qasimov, the khan of *Orta Jüz* (the Middle Horde) and the grandson of Ablay Khan, the last Sultan of the three Kazak Hordes, led the greatest Kazak revolt against the Russians. Another widespread uprising against the conscription of the Muslim *inorodtsy*<sup>5</sup> to the imperial army, who were previously exempt of military service, started in 1916 throughout Turkestan, but the "Kazakh resistance there was even more widespread and better organized."<sup>6</sup>

Following the unsuccessful negotiations with the Khokand Government, Alaş Orda organized the third Kazak Congress in Orenburg December 5-13, 1917 (just a few months after the Bolshevik Revolution in Petrograd), which proclaimed the autonomy of the Kazaks and elected an executive body headed by Alihan Bökeyhan-uli.<sup>7</sup> This was the Kazakhs' first experience of independence after the decline of the Kazak Khanate. Being aware of the great role Islam played as the major link among all Central Asian peoples, Soviet leaders conducted an elaborate policy toward "the creation of Muslim republics and the consolidation of their republican, not ethnic identity. Culturally it appeared in policies aiming to create a new Soviet man, by suppression of Islam and Russification."<sup>8</sup>

The statute granted to the Kazaks on August 26, 1920, as the Autonomous Kirghiz Socialist Soviet Republic among other seventeen autonomous regions and republics of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), was that of the 'union

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<sup>4</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Stanford, 1987, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Inorodtsy* was a Russian term to denote the non-Russian and/or non-Orthodox Christian subjects of the Russian Empire.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>7</sup> *Istoriya Kazakhskoy SSR*, Alma-Ata, 1943, p. 427; and G. Mel'nikov, *Oktyabr' v Kazakhstane*, Alma-Ata: 1930, p. 21; both cited by Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, "Civil War and New Governments," in Edward Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia*, North Carolina, Durham, 1994, p. 236.

<sup>8</sup> Stephan Blank, "Soviet Reconquest of Central Asia," in Hafeez Malik (ed.), *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, New York, 1994, p. 40.



republic', which in theory allowed the right to separate from the RSFSR.<sup>9</sup> This stage of Soviet rule caused great economic and social upheaval among the Kazaks who had not recovered from the 1916 uprising yet. The severe famine of the 1920-1921, which caused the death of some one million<sup>10</sup> Kazaks, did not allow them to organize sizeable resistance and made them dependant on the new regime. During the first years of Soviet rule in Kazakstan a great number of Kazak nomads opposing the new regime fled to the neighbouring regions of China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Iran. The capital of the Kirghiz [Kazak] ASSR, firstly seated in Orenburg in 1920, was moved on Ak Mescit (Qzıl Orda) in 1924. The same year Orenburg was incorporated in the RSFSR as an *oblast*, whereas Syr Darya and Jetisu (Semirechye) oblasts were transferred into the Kirghiz ASSR from the Turkestan ASSR and in 1928, the capital was moved southward, this time to Vernyi, renamed Alma-Ata.<sup>11</sup> In 1932, the Karakalpak Autonomous oblast, then a part of Kirghiz ASSR, was attached to the RSFSR as the Karakalpak ASSR, and became a part of the Uzbek SSR in 1936.<sup>12</sup> The name of the Kazak republic also succumbed changes: in 1925 the misnomer, the *Kirgiz* ASSR, was officially renamed the *Kazak* ASSR, which was again replaced by another misnomer *Kazakh* in 1936.<sup>13</sup>

The economic plight among the Kazaks, which was caused by long-lasting Civil war and terror by the new regime, was relatively lessened by the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was conducted during the first five years of 1920s. The delaying of nationalisation and allowance of limited ownership of land and livestock started to improve their well-being. After the death of Lenin in 1924 and the rise of Stalin as the

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964, pp. 247-250.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup> *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 400, and Elizabeth Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule: A Study in Culture Change*, New York, 1966, p. 117.

sole power-holder in the state, social and economic policy toward the Kazaks was as formidable as any time before:

The cost of collectivisation campaign in terms of human and animal losses was calamitous: out of a Kazakh population of approximately 4,120,000 in 1930, some 1,750,000 had died from starvation, epidemics and executions by 1939- over 40 percent of the entire population (this is in addition to deaths from natural causes); 200,000 fled into neighbouring countries and remained there... and 453,000 took refuge in neighbouring Soviet republics, also to remain there permanently.<sup>14</sup>

On December 5, 1936,<sup>15</sup> Kazakstan, along with the Kirghiz Republic, became a union republic of the Soviet Union. This union republic status, which presumed the nominal right to separation from the USSR, remained until December 1991.

In 1923, the Soviet government adopted different Arabic alphabets for Uzbek, Kazak, and Kyrghyz, thus artificially complicating their communication and from 1925 on, the importation of printed materials in the Arabic alphabet was forbidden.<sup>16</sup> In 1928,<sup>17</sup> the modified Latin alphabet was introduced for Central Asian languages, aiming to undermine the kinship among these languages and dialects and to create a new type of literate individual. However, the adoption of the Latin alphabet among Central Asian peoples became problematic after Turkey's adoption of the Latin alphabet, which meant that the Central Asian could easily follow Turkish press and publications. In 1939-1940, new Cyrillic script superseded the Latin script in the script of Central Asian languages.<sup>18</sup>

However, among all the impacts of the Soviet regime on the social, cultural, and political life of the Kazaks, the most detrimental one was the Soviets' deliberate demographic policy, which totally destroyed the ethnic composition of Kazakstan.

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<sup>12</sup> I. Khodorov, "Natsional'noe razmezhevanie Srednei Azii," *Novyi Vostok*, No. 8/9 (1925), pp. 68ff; cited by d'Encausse, "The National Republics Lose their Independence," in Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia*, p. 257.

<sup>13</sup> Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State*, London, 1995, p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> M. B. Tatimov, *Sotsial'naiya obuslovlennost' demograficheskikh protsessov*, Alma-Ata, 1989, pp. 120-26; cited by Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity*, p. 45.

<sup>15</sup> d'Encausse, "The National Republics Lose Their Independence," p. 257.

<sup>16</sup> Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

During the period from 1931 to 1940, some 509,000 people migrated from other regions of the USSR through labour recruitment alone.<sup>19</sup> At the end of 1930s, several ethnic groups and nationalities were deported to Kazakhstan, namely, the Volga Germans, Koreans from the Far East, Poles from the Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia. These forced migrations of non-Kazaks, along with the increasing number of non-Kazak labourers led to the radical decline of the ratio of Kazaks within the total population of Kazakhstan. In 1939, the number of Kazaks had dropped by 20.5% since 1926 – becoming 38% of the population; Russians became the major ethnic group within Kazakhstan due to a 20% increase, making them 40.2% of the whole population.<sup>20</sup> This plight was sizeably worsened during the World War II: more than 450,000<sup>21</sup> Kazaks were conscripted into the Soviet Army and some 536,000<sup>22</sup> people were evacuated from western regions of the USSR to Kazakhstan. In addition, 2.5 million German and Japanese prisoners of war had worked in Kazak territory until their return in 1950s.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, about 2 million people, mostly from the European part of the USSR came to cultivate 'Virgin Lands' during 1954-1962 and some 500,000 industrial construction and transportation workers had been recruited to work in Kazakhstan, which -by 1959- raised the percentage of Russians to 42.7%.<sup>24</sup> The number of Kazaks dropped by 8% and fell to the nadir of 30%.<sup>25</sup>

After the appointment of Dinmuhamed Kunayev, an ethnic Kazak, as the first secretary of the Kazak Communist party in 1959, and especially after his appointment as the full member in the *Politburo* of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of

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<sup>19</sup> L. S. Rogachevskaya, *Likvidatsiya bezrabotitsy v SSSR: 1917-1930 gg*, Moscow, 1973, p. 88; cited by *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 402.

<sup>20</sup> *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 402.

<sup>21</sup> Olcott, *The Kazaks*, p. 188.

<sup>22</sup> *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 403.

<sup>23</sup> *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 18 June 1989; cited by *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 403.

<sup>24</sup> *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 403.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



the Soviet Union in April 1971,<sup>26</sup> the participation of the Kazaks in the government and their process of urbanisation increased: "whereas in 1964 only 33 percent of the members of the Council of Ministers were Kazakh, by 1981 Kazakhs held 60 percent of the posts, and the Kazakh share of the ministerial and state chair positions increased from 39 to 61 percent."<sup>27</sup> After 1970s, the disparity between Russians and Kazaks began to decrease due to the greater natural increase of population among the Kazaks and migration between republics. The average number of children under 18 in a Central Asian family was 5.7, while that of the RSFSR was only 3.8.<sup>28</sup> During 1978-89, the rate of increase of Kazaks was 23.5% and that of Russians was (-3.9)%.<sup>29</sup> In 1970, the number of Kazaks reached 4,234,000 (32.6% of the population), while Russians amounted 5,522,000 (42.5%) and Ukrainians, the third largest ethnic group, amounted to 933,000 (7.2%).<sup>30</sup> This demographic process was also spurred by a wave of Kazaks who returned from other republics of the USSR, and later also from other countries: just during 1991-92, 41,000 Kazaks came from Mongolia.<sup>31</sup>

On December 17, 1986, following the removal of Kunayev from his post as First Secretary of the Kazak Communist Party, who on charges of 'tribalism' and 'tribal protectionism',<sup>32</sup> and of ongoing corruption throughout the republic, he was replaced by Gennadiy Kolbin, an ethnic Russian, with no former experience in Kazakhstan. Upon these developments, mass riots of university students began in the main square of Almaty. These December riots, also known as *Jeltoksan* (December), represented the peak of the manifestation of Kazak national consciousness during the Soviet period.

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<sup>26</sup> Edward Allworth, "The New Central Asians," in Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia*, p. 552.

<sup>27</sup> Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 244.

<sup>28</sup> Allworth, "The New Central Asians," p. 540.

<sup>29</sup> *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 406.

<sup>30</sup> *Itogi vsesoyuznoy perepisi naseleniya 1970g*, vol. 4, Moscow: 1973, p. 13; cited by *Istoriya Kazakhstana*, p. 404.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>32</sup> Allworth, "The New Central Asians," p. 564.

On the eve of its 'catapult' to independence, Kazakhstan still remained a mostly Slav-populated state and its native Kazak population seriously suffered from the Soviet policy of Russification. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and especially after the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) the new republic was anticipated to become Russia's 'younger brother' with no other option but tacitly to accept Russian intrusion. In fact, the position of the Kazak President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who always sounded eager for integration and cooperation in the former Soviet space and initiated of several 'odd' ideas, obviously generated such an impression. Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian state that has direct borders with Russia. Kazakhstan was the only Soviet-successor state where the titular nation did not of an consist absolute majority. Also, Kazakhstan has no direct land borders with non-CIS Muslim states. Under these circumstances, it was anticipated that the only way of survival for Kazakhstan as an independent state -or even as a nation- was the satisfaction of Russian aspirations, and by not causing any discontent among the republic's Russian population, which might lead to armed conflicts or even war, as had happened in Georgia and Moldova.

In this present work, I attempt to present the peculiar way of Kazak foreign and domestic policies, which makes the republic completely different from the other former Soviet states. My basic argument in this work is that Kazak regional policy has two completely opposite sides: one that is *presented* and *pronounced* by Kazak official and another in the way of its *implementation*, which, for the most part, contradicts the rhetoric of the leaders. Contrary to what many scholars have argued for several years, I assert that Kazakhstan's foreign policy actions are not just simultaneous reactions to current events, but an astute and well-planned policy, which is the greatest difference

between Kazakhstan's policy and that of other Central Asian states. Other peculiar features of Kazak foreign policy are its versatility and flexibility.

In this work, I focus on *regional* policy and foreign relations of Kazakhstan, dwelling on Russia and the CIS structure (chapter I), China and the Central Asian states (chapter II), and the Islamic World —Turkey, the ECO countries (Iran, Pakistan), and the Middle East (the Arab World, Palestine and Israel)— (chapter III).

# CHAPTER I: RUSSIA AND KAZAKSTAN: IS BIG BROTHER STILL WATCHING?

## **1. The Soviet legacy and present-day Kazakhstan**

Throughout its history, the Russian state remained a Eurasian power which aimed at becoming a mighty and respectable European power, which was supported by its Asian colonies. The Russian Empire enjoyed its superior status at the crossroad of trading routes between rich eastern countries such as India, China, and Persia, and Western Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of several independent states, Russia lost its direct control, at least nominally, over those new states. In this regard, according to a number of geostrategic, socio-economic, and demographic features, the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) represents a unique case among the republics of the former USSR. As Tatiana Shaumian asserts, there are three essential geopolitical peculiarities in Russian policy toward the new states:

In the first place, the Central Asian republics form a natural and highly controlled buffer between Russia and the other countries of Asia. Secondly, a thorny legacy of the past decades of Moscow's supremacy consists of the vast Russian diaspora that has occurred throughout these states. ...Lastly, special types of essential economic links have been established between Russia and the Central Asian states during the Soviet period.<sup>33</sup>

Although the above-mentioned circumstances are true of all Soviet successor states in Central Asia, they have an even stronger meaning for Kazakhstan. Firstly, the Republic of Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian state that has direct borders with the Russian Federation (RF). Therefore, Kazakhstan could be regarded as Russia's passage to the Central Asian Muslim states. Secondly, for a very long period, Kazakhstan had been a state where the titular nation consisted of less than 50 % of the total population and Slavs along with so-called 'Russian-speakers' (*ruskoyazychnye*) had amounted to the absolute majority. Thirdly, the Kazak economy, formerly the most industrialized

Central Asian state and huge mineral resources, has been hampered by the collapse of the Union-wide industrial machine which could function only with the contribution of all its units throughout the USSR.

#### **A. Economic interdependence**

Among all newly independent Central Asian states, Kazakhstan became the first one which was fully integrated into the Russian economy. At the beginning, Kazakhstan was the meat and wool provider for Russian industry, but later the Kazak pasturelands attracted more Russian peasants emancipated from serfdom in 1861. Russia's economic domination was buttressed by the building of the Orenburg-Tashkent railroad line, which made possible the development of heavy industry, notably mining and metallurgy. Since the collapse of the USSR and destruction of the common economic space among the Soviet states and, to some extent other socialist states of the COMECON, the economies and industries of particular states were cut off from their former partners. In addition, the ongoing process of privatization exacerbated the situation because it was mostly carried out with no sense of technical or economic logic.

After achieving independence, the creation of a viable economic system and improvement the population's everyday life became key aspect of Nazarbayev's policy. His crafty rhetoric about becoming the next 'Asian Tiger' by exploring of the country's mineral resources, had excited the Kazakstanis who started to anticipate their 'bright future'. In practice, the Kazak economy seemed to be split:<sup>34</sup> the industrialized north, which is closely related to the southern Siberian economic system of Russia and the agriculture-dominated south of the republic. On the eve of the break-up of the USSR, Kazakhstan, the second largest republic by its territory after the RSFSR, possessed a

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<sup>33</sup> Tatiana Shaumian, "Foreign Policy Perspectives of the Central Asian States," in Touraj Atabaki and John O'Kane (eds.), *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, London and New York, 1998, p.65.

<sup>34</sup> John Anderson, *The International Relations of Central Asia*, Manchester, 1997, p. 115.

work force of 6.5 million, of which 21.4 % were engaged in the industrial sector.<sup>35</sup> The republic was one of the prominent producers of grain, yielding 17 % of the whole Soviet grain production.<sup>36</sup> The former Soviet machine-building industry, 70 % of which later passed to the RF, was dependent on Kazakhstan's and Central Asian non-ferrous metals, where it obtained half of its need.<sup>37</sup> As was righteously noted, "raw materials from the South are indispensable requisites for Russia's development."<sup>38</sup> As shown by the process of the Soviet state-building, Russia remained the center where most of manufacturing plants were located. The local industry in Kazakhstan had a complementary inclination: Kazakstani industrial plants were projected to process rich local raw materials and produce interim goods to feed factories in Russia.

For Kazakhstan, as for any other Central Asian state, Russia perceives its status as a major trading partner and supplier of basic goods: "this trade is proportionately more significant in the economies of the fourteen other successor states than vice versa (that is, regional trade represents a smaller share of Russia's total trade and of its total GDP)."<sup>39</sup> In the case of Kazakhstan, Russia provided 68 % of the republic's total imports and imported 53 % of its exports in 1992,<sup>40</sup> the first year of the republic's independence. More importantly, the oil and gas sectors of Kazakhstan which were regarded as the main breeders of the economy, were themselves severely dependent on Russian refineries and pipelines. The exigency of energy and refined fuel could have paralyzed the country's economy. At the heyday of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was one of the main producers of advanced weapons and military technology, producing some 11 % of the Soviet

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<sup>35</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's New States: Independence, Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, Washington, D.C., 1996, (hereafter *CANS*), p. 65.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel C. Diller, *Russia and the Independent States*, Washington, D.C., 1993, p. 253.

<sup>37</sup> E.F. Morozov, "Bol'shoy Yevraziyskiy Proekt," *Russkiy geograficheskiy sbornik*, No. 2 [ n.p., n.d.], p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Philip G. Roeder, "From Hierarchy to Hegemony: The Post-Soviet Security Complex," in David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan (eds.), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1997, p. 231.

military production.<sup>41</sup> However, after the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the USSR and the end of the Cold War, most of the factories could not carry on production. The sharp decline in production among Kazakhstan's union-wide industries caused a great wave of social discontent as a reaction to great unemployment and delay of salary payments. The republic could not cope up with this problem: it neither was able to arrange clients abroad nor able to convert the industry to supply civil local demand. As a result, many large factories were privatized for very low prices and sold to people who were not capable of creating an economically feasible enterprise.

The leadership of Kazakhstan needed to face this problem of economic dependence on Russia. The creation of a viable economy and social and economic welfare for every Kazakstani citizen was a vital requirement for the state-survival. Social discontent could exacerbate already existing extreme separatist or reactionary movements. Therefore, the continuation, or at least less painful transformation, of the republic's economy was one of the main, if not the main, aspects of the republic's foreign policy. In short, one can easily find economic intentions in every step of Nazarbayev's policies.

## **B. Russia and military sites**

As Irina Zviagelskaia has stated, Russia did not perceive Central Asia as a region of special (or primary) importance, with the exception of Kazakhstan.<sup>42</sup> So what makes Kazakhstan the matter of special importance for Russia? Apart from the presence of a large Russian population there and rich oil reserves, as well as Kazakhstan's key geo-strategic position, there is a more pragmatic reason for Russia that directly affects the security and defence of the Russian Federation. During the Soviet period, and particularly during the Second World War period, when most of the west of the USSR fell under German control, Kazakhstan became the center of military production due to

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<sup>40</sup> Irina Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, London, 1995, p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 65.



its rich mineral resources, infrastructure and geographic location. Some of the military plants located on the territory of the Kazak SSR were the most prominent throughout the union. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the independent republic of Kazakhstan, the military sites located on Kazak soil became the property of the new state.

Among many military industrial and testing sites located in Kazakhstan, which had vital importance for the USSR to become and remain a superpower, the most prominent and well-known ones were the Semipalatinsk nuclear test-site, the Baykonur space and missile center, and ICBM bases with early warning radar systems.

The Semipalatinsk nuclear test-site, which was established in 1948 encompassed an area of 18,000 square kilometers.<sup>43</sup> The test-site had remained the heart of the Soviet nuclear armament project as the only underground test-site in the USSR until August 29, 1991,<sup>44</sup> when it was officially closed by a decree of the Kazak President Nazarbayev. The nuclear tests carried out at the test-site caused enormous ecological disaster, the damages of which have not been eliminated yet. It is not accidental that one of the first, and then obviously the strongest, political movements in Kazakhstan was the Nevada-Semey (Semipalatinsk) Antinuclear organization led by prominent Kazak writer Oljas Suleymenov. During the 43 years of its functioning some 459 nuclear explosions, of which were 113 in the atmosphere, were carried out at the site. It was estimated that during this period more than 500,000 Kazakstanis had been exposed to radiation.<sup>45</sup> Deprived of the major nuclear test-site and not being able to afford the construction of another one on its own soil, Russia became an ardent supporter of the

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<sup>42</sup> Zviagelskaia, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> "The IAEA Expertise on the Semipalatinsk Test-Site," *Argumenty i fakty-Kazakhstan*, No. 2-3, January 1995, p.3; cited by Murat Laumulin, *Foreign Policy and Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Almaty, 1997, p.30.

<sup>44</sup> David T. Twining, *The New Eurasia: A Guide to the Republic of the Former Soviet Union*, Westport, Connecticut, 1993, p. 184.

limitation of nuclear tests following the collapse of the USSR. Strong public opinion in Kazakhstan, bolstered by well-organized anti-nuclear organizations, prevented Russian pressure on Kazakhstan to reopen the site.

By the collapse of the USSR, Kazakhstan inherited two Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) bases: at Jangız-Töbe and Derzhavinsk, both comprising 104 SS-18 missiles, an airbase of 40 TU-95 heavy bombers, and a related radar base.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the ICBMs, Kazakhstan obtained some 1,410 nuclear warheads<sup>47</sup>, which were designed to be carried by the bomber aircraft. The possession of nuclear missiles and warheads made Kazakhstan one of the four former Soviet nuclear states (in addition to Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, and the first (and only at that time) Muslim nuclear state. This status as a nuclear power gave the republic some bargaining power, especially in getting foreign aid and security guarantees. During the December 1991 meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the four Soviet-successor nuclear states agreed to ship the nuclear weapons located in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus to Russia for dismantling by July 1, 1992.<sup>48</sup> Kazakhstan's position to become a non-nuclear state was again approved during the Tashkent meeting of the CIS members on May 15, 1992.<sup>49</sup>

Another important question in post-Soviet Russo-Kazak relations was that of the future status of aerospace and military installations located in Kazakhstan, the most important of which was the Baykonur space center. The Baykonur space center, which quite surprisingly retained its Turkic name despite the fact of being one of the greatest

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<sup>45</sup> L.K. Bakayev and N.O. Urpekov, *Voyennaya i vnesnyaya bezopasnost' Kazakhstana na poroge XXI veka*, Almaty, 1998, p. 35.

<sup>46</sup> Laumulin, p. 30.

<sup>47</sup> R. Jeffrey Smith, "3 Former Soviet Republic Meet U.S. Army Terms," *Washington Post*, April 27, 1992; cited by Twining, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> "An Agreement Between the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States on Strategic Forces," *Moscow TASS*, 09:25 GMT, 31 Dec 1991 in *FBIS-SOV-91-251*, 31 December 1991, pp. 17-18; cited by Twining, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Twining, pp. 148-149.

achievements of Great October, again had vital importance for Russia which could not afford another such center, and whose continuation of space programs depended on the implementation of commercial launches for foreign companies. On the other hand, the Baykonur center was a matter of a state-esteem for the Republic of Kazakhstan, which nonetheless engaged in the space programs- a unique status among other CIS countries, with the exception of Russia. However, the republic had neither the financial nor the technological facilities to conduct them by itself.

The status of Baykonur was regulated by the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between Russia and Kazakhstan, signed on May 25, 1992, in Moscow. Among a number of different issues covered by the agreement, 'the common use of military installations' including 'the joint use of the Baykonur cosmodrome' were agreed upon.<sup>50</sup> The agreement on the lease of the space center was signed on March 28, 1994,<sup>51</sup> after a series of negotiations between Russia and Kazakhstan. According to the agreement, Baykonur legally belongs to Kazakhstan and would be leased to Russia for a period of 20 years starting from January 1994 for \$115 million rent per annum; also, the Russian side assured the Kazaks that the center would not become a "Russian military base."<sup>52</sup> But the 'lucrative' agreement for Kazakhstan has never been fully implemented: the rent agreement was not officially ratified by Russian authorities and the Russian government always delayed the rent payment. The Baykonur case became a problem in Russo-Kazak relations after the explosion and crash of the Russian 'Proton' rocket on July 5, 1999, when fragments fell on the settlement of Alasu in the Karaganda region.<sup>53</sup> The Kazak government banned the launch of 'Proton'-class carrier rockets and also

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<sup>50</sup> Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia*, London, 1994, p. 124; and Ivan Ivanov, "Treaty Signed," *ITAR-TASS*, 16:45 GMT, 25 May 1992 in *FBIS-SOV-92-101*, 26 May 1992, p. 14; cited by Twining, pp. 149-150.

<sup>51</sup> "Status at Baikonur after Agreement Viewed," in *FBIS-SOV-015-5*, 24 January 1995, p. 27; cited by Shireen Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, Westport, Connecticut, 1996, p. 121.

demanded damage compensation and all rent to be paid on time– as well as offering amendments to the original agreement. Considering the issue, director of the Kazak National Aerospace Agency Meirbek Moldabekov told that, "without the fulfilment of these conditions, we have no legal or moral right to resume Proton launches."<sup>54</sup>

The explosion and crash of the 'Proton' rocket<sup>55</sup> frustrated the prestige of the Russian aerospace industry, while the Kazak government did not intend to concede. After lengthy negotiations involving the two countries' top politicians, the leasing agreement was rectified in accordance with Kazak demands: in addition to 1999's rent of \$115 million, which had already been paid, Russia was obliged to pay 57 million Tenge as compensation for the Proton accident damage.<sup>56</sup> Also, Kazakhstan was now to participate in commercial launches from Baykonur beginning in the second half of the year 2000. In 1999, the total value of commercial launches from Baykonur was estimated at around \$1 billion.<sup>57</sup>

During the first week of June 2000 another agreement on the leasing of several military arms-testing sites was considered by the Kazak parliament. The agreements signed in 1995 regulated the lease terms of four weapon testing sites on the territory of Kazakhstan, specializing in anti-aircraft and air-defence missiles, for a period of 10 years. The important aspect of the agreement is that some \$24.3 million of total \$27.5 million annual rent was to be paid by arms, military technology, and education of Kazak military staff at Russian military establishments.<sup>58</sup> Still, Kazakhstan enjoys its legal possession of the Baykonur center and 'membership' into the 'space club'. Many Kazaks

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<sup>52</sup> "Baykonur Will Become a Military Base," in *FBIS-SOV-95-006*, 10 January 1995, p. 27; cited by Hunter, p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> *ITAR-TASS*, 09:35 GMT, 2 Nov 1999; in *FBIS-SOV-1999-1102*.

<sup>54</sup> "Kazakhstan Urges Lifting of Russian Proton Rocket Ban," in *FBIS-SOV-1999-0803*.

<sup>55</sup> The July 5, 1999 accident was not the first; another Proton crashed on June 5, 1998; see "Kazakhstan Wants Damages for Russia's Rocket Accident," in *FBIS-SOV-1999-1102*.

<sup>56</sup> "Kazakhstan to Carry Out Space Projects with Russia," in *FBIS-SOV-200-0120*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 22, 02 June 2000.

are employed in Baykonur's space programs and two Kazaks– one of them, Talgat Musabayev, who led an international Russian-French crew– have already participated in Russian space voyages.

### **C. Kazakhstan and the formation of the CIS**

The formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (*Sodruzhestvo nezavisimyykh gosudarstv*) following the *de jure* and *de facto* collapse of the Soviet Union has usually been regarded as the prolongation of Russian imperial policy by seeking to maintain Russian influence within the area of the former Soviet Union. Surely, the agreements and negotiations of the commonwealth are directly related with Russia's 'global' ambitions and regulations, notably: the division of the Soviet debts, possession of Soviet assets abroad, nuclear and conventional weapons, economic regulations, the 'ruble zone', etc. It is beyond doubt that the formation of the CIS would help Russia to harmonize and control the participants' policies and obtain some 14 new allies in the international community. The formation of the CIS was regarded as a result of Russian initiative or a brain-child of Russia's genius policy-making in order to regain the influence in the former USSR. As Martha Brill Olcott argues, the CIS was "an ideal way for policymakers in Moscow to supervise, if not control outright, economic and security policies in former Soviet territories."<sup>59</sup> M.B.O. also asserts that the CIS was a device to advance Russian goals as far as "the constituent member states of the CIS were still unaccustomed to exercising their own sovereignty."<sup>60</sup> But, in fact, this idea is unable to explain the initially ardent endeavour of the Central Asian states at first to preserve the Soviet Union, and later to integrate at the maximum available level under the umbrella of the CIS. Kazakhstan under president Nazarbayev, the most ardent supporter of integration and creator of many related innovations, had conducted a policy

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<sup>59</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

that was more pro-integrative than that of Russia. So what forced the president to play a role that helped Russia to 'supervise, if not control outright, economic and security policies" in Kazakstan?

The pro-integration policy of the Kazak President Nazarbayev seems, in fact, not to be a tacit allegiance to an all-powerful, in that the CIS provided some advantages to the Kazak leadership. Firstly, the establishment of the CIS made Nazarbayev a Union-wide respected politician trying to preserve the glorious union and its 'good old days'. In the last days of the USSR, it has been rumoured that Nazarbayev was to become the prime minister of the USSR or even the president. Secondly, Nazarbayev, as almost all of the NIS's presidents, was a Moscow appointee during the Soviet time. The collapse of the whole system could weaken his legitimacy. Meanwhile, the rise of presidents Gamsakhurdia and Elçibey who did not emerge from the Communist Party structure probably scared him. The growing national awakening throughout the former USSR caused violent ethnic conflicts in some republics. As far as Central Asia is concerned, according to the Institute of Geography at the Russian Academy of Sciences, there are at least at least 19 zones of dispute.<sup>61</sup> In these terms, preserving the *status quo* would be the only reasonable way to prevent national separatism and social unrest, which might directly undermine the ruling power.

Another important reason for Kazakstan's deeper integration with Russia and the rest of the former USSR, was its lack of preparation and inability to conduct a favourable foreign and domestic policy, and to create a state system at home with all of its required components. At the time of the collapse of the Soviet, any effort of the republic to be involved in foreign policy activities could worsen its international

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<sup>61</sup> *Moskovskie Novosti*, 17 March 1991; cited by Zviagelskaia, p. 9.

position since then the republic's foreign ministry consisted of only thirty people.<sup>62</sup> All administrative organs in the republic, including ministries, were simply the local branches of all-Soviet organs located in Moscow. The local administration was never obliged, nor allowed, to conduct its own policy. Rather, the local administration carried out orders strictly in accordance with Moscow's instructions. The formation of viable governmental, administrative, and military bodies needed time and enormous financial resources. Therefore, the CIS could have become for Kazakhstan an umbrella that might protect it from the lethal side of independent state-building during this transitional period.

For, Russia the establishment of the CIS would create a legitimate base for its control, especially in the case of dispatching nuclear weapons, economic interactions, and military presence. Irina Zviagelskaia has noted that one of the main Russian interests in the former Soviet territories is "the prevention of a vacuum that can be filled with forces hostile to Russia."<sup>63</sup>

Kazakhstan, which a Russian analyst called as an "indispensable member of any future federation or confederation,"<sup>64</sup> had played an important role in the creation of the CIS and was an initiator of many of its cooperation projects. Initially, the CIS was to become a union of Slavic states, when the Slavic *troika* -Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine- signed the Treaty of the Formation of the CIS in Minsk on December 8, 1991. Paradoxically, these three countries were the original signatories of the founding constitution of the USSR in 1922.<sup>65</sup> But it was Kazakhstan's president Nazarbayev who pretended to create a Central Asian union as a counterbalance of the Slavic one. Olcott suggests that the specter of the Slavic-Turkic rivalry was one of the reasons why the

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<sup>62</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia's Catapult to Independence," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Summer 1992), p. 120.

<sup>63</sup> Zviagelskaia, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

Slavic CIS allowed the widening of the CIS membership.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, it was not a surprise that this treaty, which created the 'greater CIS', was signed at the then Kazak capital, Almaty, on December 21, 1991.

One of the fundamental pillars of the CIS system was the Treaty on Collective Security signed in Tashkent May 15, 1992, by Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Armenia.<sup>67</sup> Two important articles of the treaty, articles 1 and 4, stated that any aggression against any of the participating states would be perceived as that against all participating states and in such a case, other participating states would give every necessary assistance, including military support.<sup>68</sup> Another important aspect of the treaty, which directly affected the foreign policy inclination of the participating states, was that the treaty did not allow treaty participants "to enter any alliance or engage in any action which may be directed against another participating state."<sup>69</sup> In addition to the main treaty, another protocol of the use on the CIS multinational peacekeeping force in interethnic conflicts was signed on July 16, 1992, in Tashkent.<sup>70</sup> The Treaty on Collective Security was initially planned to be comprehensive in nature, by defining the exterior border of the participating states as the border of the CIS, thereby its defence obligating to the CIS armed force jurisdiction;<sup>71</sup> as well other CIS states to join the treaty.<sup>72</sup> The Republic of Kazakhstan fully relied on the possibility of the creation of the common CIS armed forces and did not endeavour to form its own. Not surprisingly, the Kazak Ministry of Defence was

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<sup>65</sup> Olcott, "Central Asia's Catapult to Independence," p. 108.

<sup>66</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 54.

<sup>67</sup> Mohiaddin Mesbahi, "Russia and the Geopolitics of the Muslim South," in Mohiaddin Mesbahi (ed.), *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union: Domestic and International Dynamics*, Gainesville, Florida, 1994, p. 285.

<sup>68</sup> *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 23 May 1992, p. 2; and *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, 23 May 1992; both cited by Mesbahi, "Russia and Geopolitics," p. 285.

<sup>69</sup> Amin Saikal, "Russia and Central Asia," in Amin Saikal and William Maley (eds.), *Russia in Search for its Future*, Melbourne, 1995, p. 149.

<sup>70</sup> Twining, p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Mesbahi, "Russia and Geopolitics," p. 286.



established in May 1992.<sup>73</sup> The Commonwealth also signed a number of treaties and regulations on economic issues, such as an accord on free trade and customs union signed in March 1992,<sup>74</sup> the October 1994 agreements on greater economic integration,<sup>75</sup> the October 9, 1992 Bishkek summit on the preservation of the 'ruble zone',<sup>76</sup> etc.

For Kazakhstan, as for most of the CIS countries, the Commonwealth provides several economic, political, and some military advantages, while not forcing to give up state sovereignty or to pay heavy costs. First, it retains the Russian nuclear umbrella. In the word of its then foreign minister, Andrey Kozyrev, Russia "has an historic duty to guard the border because it is a frontier of the CIS."<sup>77</sup> Second, Russia, affraid of the social unrest that can affect the fate of Russians or the security of Russia itself, became a potential ally against nationalist domestic opposition. Russia was never concerned—contrary to external powers—with the ethics and ideology,<sup>78</sup> thus giving the local ruling elite freedom of movement. Third, the reestablishment of new-imperial policy over the CIS countries obliged Russia to make direct financial contribution to the ruling elite of the republics<sup>79</sup> and to provide "some level of social welfare,"<sup>80</sup> to satisfy local expectations from the CIS—hard burben for Russia.burden for Russia. Lastly, the establishment of the CIS allotted extra time to Kazakhstan to carry out many financial and administrative tasks, which needed long requiring long plannings and resources, such as the preservation of a national currency, establishment of I isto planning and

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<sup>72</sup> Twining, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Philip Petersen, "Security Policy in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *European Security*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1995), p. 161.

<sup>74</sup> Diller, p. 181.

<sup>75</sup> Vladimir Barsamov, "Kazakhstan: How Long Can Ethnic Harmony Last?" in Alexei Arbatov *et al.* (eds.), *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997, p. 315.

<sup>76</sup> Twining, p. 22.

<sup>77</sup> *Interfax*, 16 March 1994; and *ITAR-TASS*, 3 November 1994; both cited by Roeder, p. 222.

<sup>78</sup> Hunter, p. 122; and Roeder, pp. 236-238.

<sup>79</sup> Roeder, pp. 236-238.

resources, such as the preservation of its national currency, establishment of a new state apparatus and formation of a military body, etc.

In fact, the CIS could not become a device to control the so-called "near abroad" mostly because Russia was not able to afford this burden, though again it prevented the former Soviet states from joining other alliances and blocs. The preservation of the ruble zone delayed, and even frustrated, economic reforms in Russia.<sup>81</sup> The issue of a Kazak currency, Tenge, which is now one of the most stable national currencies among post-Soviet states, gradually set the Kazak economy free of Russian influence. By early 1996, the debts of the CIS countries to Russia amounted to \$9 billion,<sup>82</sup> while the Russian economy was still in severe crisis. Under these circumstances the CIS could not become a fully functioning body, while *de jure* it still exists. Furthermore, the cooperation at regional level, especially bilateral ones became a more pragmatic way for the post-Soviet cooperation. Although the *de facto* CIS period of the Russo-Kazak relations has been replaced by greater bilateral relations, Russia still remains "partner number one"<sup>83</sup> for Kazakhstan. Today the republic has become accustomed to its independence and is able to conduct policies in its own favour. Ironically, President Nazarbayev is still the most ardent supporter of the CIS integration— save President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan. However, his efforts aim mostly to calm down the growing discontent of the Kazakstani Russian population, to obtain the support of the pro-Sovietists within the countries, and to preserve the benevolence of the Russian

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<sup>80</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 143.

<sup>81</sup> *Report of the Center of International Studies*, Moscow Institute of International Relations, Moscow, September 1992, p. 17; cited by Zviagelskaia, p. 23.

<sup>82</sup> *Izvestiya*, 16 September, 1993[1996?], cited by Roeder, p. 231.

<sup>83</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakh President Says Russia 'Partner Number One'," in *FBIS-SOV-98-257*, 14 September 1998.

rulers. By pressing for the state's survival, it is clear "the survival of the state itself is an essential precondition for the leader's own survival."<sup>84</sup>

In sum, it is necessary to evaluate the eagerness of Kazakhstan towards integration and Nazarbayev's own statement that, "integration and cooperation for the CIS countries is not only for economic profit, but, so far, it is an absolutely inevitable state of spiritual and psychological stability and confidence about tomorrow."<sup>85</sup> In the context of above analysis, one finds that it is not so difficult to answer Philip Roeder's paradoxical question "why some successor states have not simply acquiesced, but enthusiastically encouraged growth of the relationship that underpin Russia's hegemony."<sup>86</sup>

## **2. The Russians in Kazakhstan and the demographic structure**

As Philip Roeder has rightly noted, the most important security problem for the former Soviet states is their 'Russia problem'.<sup>87</sup> This problem and its perils are greater for Kazakhstan than any other Soviet-successor state: Kazakhstan has a more than 7,000 km-long<sup>88</sup> border with Russia; Russia has a population that is 9 times greater than that of Kazakhstan, and a GDP 13 times, and as large an armed forces 38 times larger.<sup>89</sup> It has also immense number of ethnic Russians, which even outnumbered the Kazak population during the Soviet period. Under these circumstances it is inevitable to recall the favourite words of the second president of the Turkish Republic, İsmet İnönü, whose witty policy saved the country from being actively involved in the World War II: "the greatest danger is the nearest one." By January 1, 1995, the Kazaks amounted to 44 %

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<sup>84</sup> Roeder, p. 221.

<sup>85</sup> Qasymjomart Tokayev, *Pod styagom nezavisimosti: Ocherki o vneshney politike Kazakhstana*, Almaty, 1997, p. 47.

<sup>86</sup> Roeder, p. 227.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>88</sup> Zviagelskaia, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> *U.S. Central Intelligence Agency*, 1995; and *International Institute of Strategic Studies*; both cited by Roeder, p. 231.

of the republic's total population, while that of Russians dropped to 36 %.<sup>90</sup> Due to certain political, economic, and demographic circumstances, notably, the broad exodus of ethnic Russians and Germans, immigration of ethnic Kazaks from abroad, greater natural birthrate of Kazaks, along with the policy of 'Kazakization' and pro-Kazak favouritism conducted by the ruling elite of the republic, it is anticipated that Kazaks will make up *more* than 60 % of the republic's population by the year 2015.<sup>91</sup> As Olcott argued: "the state can continue to exist as a home for Kazakhs only to the degree that Russia permits it to do so."<sup>92</sup> But still, the problem of Russians in Kazakhstan, which outnumber the ethnic Kazaks in five northern and eastern districts of the republic, remains the vital and most influential overtone in most of the republic's political - affairs– both foreign and domestic. Similarly, the problem of Russians in Kazakhstan is vital both to the Russian state as well as to Kazakstani Russians themselves. Any radical worsening of the *status quo* may create an enormous area of instability beside the Russian border and directly affect the fate of Russians in central and southern parts of the republic.

It is not surprising, that the first foreign minister of the post-Soviet Russia, Andrey Kozyrev, described the non-Russian former Soviet space in his first official statement as "something that could be called the 'near' abroad."<sup>93</sup> The concept of so-called 'near abroad' (*blizhnee zarubezh'e*), comprising the fourteen USSR-successor states, claimed to legitimize Russian political, military, and economic domination. In addition, another term, Russian-speakers (*russkoyazychnye*), came to be used in the official Russian lexicon. The term meant Russians plus non-titular ethnic groups whose native language

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<sup>90</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>91</sup> *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, 11 August 1992; cited by Olcott, *CANS*, p. 61.

<sup>92</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: The Demographics of Ethnic Politics," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 42, Issue 2 (March-April 1995), in *EBSCOhost* database.

<sup>93</sup> Andrey Kozyrev, "Transformed Russia in a New World," *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992 in *FBIS-SOV-RUSSIA*, 2 January 1992, p. 78; cited by Alvin Z. Rubenstein, "The Transformation of Russian Foreign

was not that of the titular group. Under these circumstances, a Georgian or a Greek living in Kazakhstan was denoted as a Russian-speaker and immediately supposed to be concern of the Russians. The Russian foreign minister Kozyrev has stated, that "protecting the human rights of Russians abroad is his primary foreign policy goal with respect to the other CIS countries. ...if necessary, Russia would use force to protect the rights of Russians in other states."<sup>94</sup> This statement was bolstered by President Yeltsin claiming that international organizations should grant Russia exclusive power to protect peace and stability in the post-Soviet area.<sup>95</sup> This Russian attitude towards the Russians in Kazakhstan became the *sine qua non* of support for both right and left-oriented Russians, from Yeltsin to Nemtsov, from Solzhenitsyn to Zhirinovskiy. Almost every Russian politician had ever criticized the policy of the Kazak government toward the Russians. It was reported that during the Almaty talks in 1992, president Yeltsin expressed the idea that Russia has certain territorial claims on Kazakhstan.<sup>96</sup> The prominent Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn claimed that "the optimal solution is Union between the three Slavic republics and Kazakhstan."<sup>97</sup> As a respond to ultranationalist claims emerged among the Russian politicians, Nazarbayev stressed that "it is now impossible to restore the Soviet state in its old borders without violence."<sup>98</sup> The Russians in Kazakhstan are spread throughout the republic's border. Although the five northern regions are predominantly populated by Russians, but they had never formed an ethnic Russian territorial or administrative formation, like the Trans-Dniester region in Moldova. One of the leading foreign policy experts in Kazakhstan, Dr. Murat Laumulin, placed the problem of increasing Russian nationalism and its attempts to

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Policy," in Karen Dawisha (ed.), *The International Dimension of Post-Communist Transition in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, Armonk, New York, 1997, p. 45.

<sup>94</sup> Diller, p. 196.

<sup>95</sup> 'Russia' TV Channel, Moscow, 28 February 1993 in *BBC Monitoring: Summary of World Broadcasts*, 2 March 1993, pp. B1-B2; cited by Mesbahi, "Russia and Geopolitics," p. 305.

<sup>96</sup> "The National Doctrine of Russia," *Obozrevatel'* (1994); cited by Barsamov, pp. 312-333.

redraw the republic's borders by incorporating some northern districts into the Russian Federation, on the top of the external developments affecting Kazakstan's security.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile the 'Russia or Russians problem' is defining the Kazak way of state-building, foreign and domestic policies, and will certainly continue to define it in the near future.

#### **A. The Cossacks**

There are a number of ethnic Russian groups and organizations, predominantly or absolutely (while according to Kazak legal prescriptions it is forbidden to form an organization consisting of exclusively one ethnic group) consisting of ethnic Slavs and Russians. Many of them deal with the general socio-economic and cultural problems of Russians, seeking for the amelioration of economic well-being, the status of the Russian language, and equality in social life. In fact, some of these organizations have much in common with some Kazak organizations and parties. The Republican Social Slavic Movement "LAD" (Harmony) (*respublikanskoe obshchestvennoe slavyanskoe dvizheniye LAD*), led by Aleksandra Dokuchaeva and the Russian community of Kazakstan (*Russkaya obshchina Kazakhstana*), led by Yuriy Bunakov, are among the most influential Russian organizations. These groups deal with the problems of Russians in Kazakstan, i.e. they do not have a Pan-Russian vision which distinguishes them from those within the Russian Federation. Moreover, they usually do not commit ultranationalist or separatist policy. However, have insisted on cultural and administrative self-rule. Many of the Kazakstani Russians, especially those whose ancestors have lived there for many generations, have a weak national identity that

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<sup>97</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Russian Question: At the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, London, 1995, p. 93.

<sup>98</sup> *FBIS-SOV-International Affairs*, 19 January 1996, p. 18, cited by Rubinstein, p. 49.

<sup>99</sup> Laumulin, p. 33.

make them, as Asian Russians, differentiated from the Russians of Russia.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the Cossacks and their organizations in Kazakhstan represent an absolutely different type of ethnic grouping. Claiming to be the descendants of the Cossacks, imperial Russian border troops, who played a vital role in conquering the Kazak lands, these organizations were formed in accordance with the para-military order of their 'ancestors', retaining military ranks, namely ataman and hetman. Consisting exclusively of males, the Cossack groups have certain military attributes, such as uniform, shoulder straps, and swords. They incline for more extreme and radical means and have close relations with Pan-Russian Cossack movements, particularly with the Ural and Siberian Cossacks.

There are three Cossack associations in Kazakhstan: the Ural Union of Cossacks, led by hetman Aleksandr Kachalin (western Kazakhstan), the Association for the Support of Semirechye Cossacks (hetman Nikolay Gyunkin, southern and central regions), and the Union of Cossacks of the Gorki line (hetman Viktor Achkasov, northern and eastern regions).<sup>101</sup> Vyacheslav Belokreniysky has argued that the great majority of the Cossacks were killed or fled out of the country during the Civil War and the first years of Bolshevik rule. Thus, the Cossack movement that emerged in Kazakhstan in the 1990s "no doubt, has little to do with the true descendants of the Cossacks."<sup>102</sup> But still, the Cossacks represent a strong and well-organized movement, comprising the Slavness, Orthodox Christianity, and Russianness and have certain separatist inclinations due to their military order and system. Another feature that makes the Cossacks different from other Russian movements is that they have close ties with other Cossack groupings in Russia, especially the Siberian Cossack organizations, which instigate their extremist

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<sup>100</sup> Roland Dannreuther, "Creating New States in Central Asia," *Adelphi Paper* 288 (March 1994), pp. 43-44.

<sup>101</sup> Barsamov, pp. 305-306.

activities.<sup>103</sup> Russia is prone to consider Kazakstan as a 'steppe region' that puts it in a different place from the rest of Central Asia. The northern and eastern provinces of the republic, which are predominantly Russian populated, are envisaged as Southern Siberia, i.e. the extension of Siberia. Officially, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Aid signed in May 1992 between Russia and Kazakstan confirmed the inviolability of existing frontiers and the territorial integrity of Kazakstan and the participants undertook "to proscribe and terminate on their territory the formation and activities of groups and organizations, as well as of individuals, directed against the independence and territorial integrity of both states or toward the exacerbation of relations between nationalities,"<sup>104</sup> Moreover, president Yeltsin's statement has assured that Russia has no territorial claims on Kazakstan.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, Russian separatist movements, spurred and supported by some Russian organizations, especially those of Russian Cossacks, represent a real impending threat to Kazakstan's integrity.

From the very beginning the Kazak government committed a restricted and suppressive policy toward the Cossacks. Most of the Cossack organizations were refused registration by the Ministry of Justice or were deliberately delayed for years. In March 1992, the *Kazatskiye Novosti* (Cossack News) and *Guberniya*, two pro-Cossack publications were refused to be allowed to renew their registration (i.e. stopped existing) and were accused of "stirring up strife between nationalities" and "encroachment on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the republic."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Vyacheslav Belokrenitsky, "Russia and Former Soviet Central Asia: The Attitude towards Regional Integrity," in Touraj Atabaki and John O'Kane (eds.), p. 56.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>104</sup> "The Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation," *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, 23 July 1992, p. 2; cited by Barsamov.

<sup>105</sup> "Kazakhstan: Yeltsin Says No Territorial Claims on Kazakhstan," *ITAR-TASS*, 13:45 GMT, 27 April 1996 in *FBIS-SOV-96-083*.

<sup>106</sup> Z. Yesimkulov, "It Isn't Worth Violating the Law," *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, 22 May 1992, p. 3; cited by Barsamov, p. 306.



In 1994, there was a shallow easing in policy toward the Cossacks. In June, the Association for Support of the Cossacks of Semirechye, and in July, a Cossack Assistance Society were registered by the Ministry of Justice, while stressing that they had no rights to constitute a military grouping and were only to promote their historical traditions, feasts, and customs.<sup>107</sup> The 'persecution' of Cossack organizations, particularly, the arrests of Cossack leaders (V. I. Achkasov, N. V. Gunkin, V. V. Miheyev, and N. I. Shibanov) in Kazakhstan has been severely criticized by Russian State Duma.<sup>108</sup>

The Cossacks, who have even presented themselves as the 'Serbs' of Kazakhstan and who would "stand firm"<sup>109</sup> have been involved in a number separatist actions. One of the most recent and notorious ones happened on November 18, 1999, when some 22 person were arrested in Öskemen (Ust-Kamenogorsk) by Kazak authorities. The separatists, led by Viktor Kazimirchuk, a Russian citizen also known as Pugachev, "intended to seize the power in Eastern Kazakhstan in order to establish the republic of 'Russian Altay'"<sup>110</sup> by armed means. One June 8, 2000, Kazimirchuk was sentenced to a 18 year imprisonment; other 13 members of the group were punished to imprisonments from 4 up to 17 years.<sup>111</sup> Even the request of Russia to ease the punishment and participation of the Russian embassy officials in the court sessions could not change the verdict.

## **B. Kazak nation-building and Russian migration**

Since Kazakhstan gained independence, one of the most important problems to be resolved became the problem of the Russians (not other minorities, although there are

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<sup>107</sup> Bess Brown, "Kazakhstan Cossack Group Gains Official Recognition," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, No. 127, 7 July 1994, pp. 2-3; cited by Petersen, p. 157; and Barsamov, p. 308.

<sup>108</sup> "Duma Criticizes 'Persecution' of Russians in Kazakhstan," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 2 June 1995, in *FBIS-SOV-95-107*, 2 June 1995.

<sup>109</sup> *Moscow News*, 20 May 1994; cited by Olcott, "Post-Soviet Kazakhstan."

<sup>110</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 24, 19 June 2000.

some 100 nationalities within the republic's borders) and the issue of Kazak nation-building. In fact, these problems were as important as national security or socio-economic well-being, and were often intertwined. Many former Soviet states, particularly Central Asian republics, have committed national policies in favour of the titular ethnic group, but Kazakhstan has certain peculiarities that made its national policy harder and more vulnerable: because of its divided ethnic composition, on the eve of independence the state could have just as easily become a 'Russian' as well.

Just before independence and onwards, the republic has launched a gradual policy of Kazakization. At the first stage, this has never been reflected in the rhetoric of the president, who still seemed to adhere to the 'great' idea of post-Soviet integration. But as soon as the Kazaks become accustomed to their privileged status of a 'titular' nation and their national awareness increased, conducting a pro-Kazak policy became a *sine qua non* for political survival. The main aspects of Kazak nation-building are favouring the ethnic Kazaks socially and economically; the encouragement of the development of the Kazak language and Kazak traditional values, to the deliberate detriment of other ethnic groups, notably Russians; immigration of ethnic Kazaks from abroad; the tacit support, at least unofficially, for the emigration of non-Kazaks, and the building of a state structure mostly consisting of Kazaks.

Following the collapse of the Soviet economy and the building of an incipient economy by means of privatization and the establishment of private enterprise, most of the key economic plants previously under the state-ownership passed to ethnic Kazaks. The enterprises largely fell under the direct control of the leaders of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, their relatives, and associates. During the process of economic transition in the republic, not only did family ties become important, but clanic-horde

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

kinship, which still occupies an important place in social relations gained increased significance. President Nazarbayev, his family, and even his *Şapraştı* clan of the Kazak *Ulu Jüz* (Elder Horde) became involved in the process of building a national bourgeoisie. One Russian newspaper has recently argued that Timur Kulebayev, the president of "KazTransOil" Company and son-in-law of Nazarbayev is certainly the richest man in the republic after Nazarbayev himself.<sup>112</sup>

Kazak clanic favouritism and nepotism has determined not only the economic life but also the social and political compound of state structure. In the first years after independence, some 80 % of Nazarbayev's administrative appointees, including regional governors, were ethnic Kazaks.<sup>113</sup> Most of the republic's key posts have gone to Kazaks, not even shallowly reflecting the ethnic composition of the state. The problem of Kazak nepotism became incessant complaint among ethnic Russians along with the problem of the Russian language and dual citizenship. According to 1994 statistics, the ratio between Kazaks and *non-Kazaks* (not only Russians) in the President's Office was 6:1; and in the Ministry of Economics, 7:1.<sup>114</sup> Even in northern and eastern regional administrations, which are predominantly Russian-populated, the ratio is only 4:1.<sup>115</sup> This disbalance is even more precipitous at the lower level of administration, and especially in the fields of culture and education. For example, the share of non-Kazaks in the ministry of Education dropped from 47 % in 1989 up to 20 % in 1992, i.e., the first year after independence.<sup>116</sup> The process of creating a Kazak economic and political elite has been launched throughout the country and in Russian-populated northern and eastern regions in particular. Moreover, "since the government still plays a large role in

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<sup>112</sup> Denis Lomov, "Sekrety sem'yi Nazarbayeva: Kazakhstan pora pereimenovat' v Nazarbay-stan," *Vremya*, No. 12, 30 May 2000; in IAC Eurasia, [www.eurasia.org.ru](http://www.eurasia.org.ru).

<sup>113</sup> Olcott, "Post-Soviet Kazakhstan."

<sup>114</sup> S. Kozlov, "Democratic in Form, National in Essence," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 April 1994, pp. 1-2; cited by Barsamov, p. 299.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

all spheres of life, including the organization of new commercial enterprises and ventures, ethnic criteria and an ethnic agenda for the state became important elements in the new economic life as well."<sup>117</sup>

In Russian media, especially after Putin, Nazarbayev is often accused of neglecting the specific problems of Kazakstani Russians and of "deliberately squeezing out of Kazakhstan all *inorodtsy* and the building of a monoethnic state."<sup>118</sup> Another important problem of the Russian diaspora and naturally one of the key instruments of nation-building (as a key means of Kazakization and elimination of the non-Kazaks from the state structure) is the Kazak language policy. The gradual penetration of the Kazak language in all spheres of life and its development eliminates the former privileged status of the Russians and the Russian language throughout the USSR. The Russians' lack of knowledge of Kazak, the official language of the RK, prevents the Russians' social and economic promotion and exacerbates their current 'second-class' position: participation in some professions is forbidden for those who do not know the state language.<sup>119</sup> According to the Kazak constitution, those who do not know Kazak can not serve in official posts after the year 2010,<sup>120</sup> – again causing an even more rapid decline in the share of non-Kazak officials. The policy of Kazakization of the state language was also underpinned by the renaming of organizations and locations with their original Kazak names, or, many times, by providing a new Kazak name. In some cases when the original name was a Russian one -such as the names of fortresses- the official spelling became adjusted due Kazak pronunciation. But, "the protest among Kazaks is not

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<sup>116</sup> A. Dokuchaeva, "Trevozhnye tendentsii v kazakhskoy etnopoliticheskoy situatsii," *Russkiy geopoliticheskiy sbornik*, No. 2, p. 76.

<sup>117</sup> Barsamov, p. 276.

<sup>118</sup> Sagyndyk Mendibayev, "'Russkiy vopros' i Nazarbayev," *Tsentral'noaziatskiy byulleten'* (IAC Eurasia), 29 May 2000.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 62.

caused by the Russian language or Russian culture (rather there is an obvious sympathy), but by the former policy of Russification."<sup>121</sup>

The 'discrimination' of the Russian language has been severely criticized by Russian politicians and by Russian organizations in Kazakhstan. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn once argued that the Kazak government allot a five-year period for the achievement of fluency in Kazak even in Russian-populated districts of Kazakhstan.<sup>122</sup> Aman Tuleyev, an ethnic Kazak with a dubious religious and ethnic identity and the governor of the Kemerovo oblast of Russia, said that a massive exodus of Russians might begin if Kazakhstan would insist on Kazak as the only state language.<sup>123</sup> The 1993 Kazak constitution granted Russian the status of a language of interethnic communication, which, in fact, did not have any legal meaning.<sup>124</sup> The new Kazak constitution adopted in 1995 recognized that "in state organizations and organs of local administration Russian would be used officially alongside with Kazak (Article 7/2)."<sup>125</sup> Again, this was a symbolic concession and in practice was ignored many times. For instance, the Senate, one of two houses of the Kazak parliament, recently decided to perform all sessions only in Kazak, which was interpreted as a direct violation of the constitution.<sup>126</sup> By another concession, the Kazak language and literature tests were deemed no longer obligatory for *everyone* taking the higher education entrance examination.<sup>127</sup> But again, according to the law "On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan," teaching of Kazak as a state language became compulsory for every school in the republic, regardless of their main language of instruction and also the Kazak language test would become

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<sup>121</sup> Burkut Ayaganov and Alibek Kuandykov, "Kazakhi v Kazakhstane," *Aziya* (Almaty), No. 24 (1993).

<sup>122</sup> Solzhenitsyn, p. 92.

<sup>123</sup> "Russia: Kazakhstan Warned of Possible Exodus by Russian Speakers," *Interfax*, 13:58 GMT, 20 November 1996; in *FBIS-SOV-96-226*.

<sup>124</sup> Barsamov, p. 326.

<sup>125</sup> A. Dokuchayeva, "Vse yazyki ravny, no kazakhsky- ravnee," *Institut stran SNG*, 22 May 2000; in IAC Eurasia, [www.eurasia.org.ru](http://www.eurasia.org.ru).

<sup>126</sup> S. Petrov, "Russkiye v Kazakhstane glazami russkogo kazakhstantsa: Yesli eto ne genotsyd, to togda chto?" *El. Pochta* (IAC Eurasia), 15 June 2000.

compulsory for entry and graduation exams for secondary and higher education.<sup>128</sup> It is interesting that the establishment of a Russian and/or Slavic university –as was established in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan– was rejected by Kazak officials, while there are several American, Turkish and other international universities. On the question if, "Is there any need to protect the Russian language?" the mayor of Almaty, Viktor Khrapunov, said that "Obviously, no, because Russian is one of the official languages of the UN."<sup>129</sup> Another scrupulous problem of the Russian community in Kazakhstan was that of dual citizenship (Russian and Kazakstani). If dual citizenship were implemented, Russia could have obtained the legal power to protect their rights and avoid the bureaucratic obstacles of integration. The request for dual citizenship was again rejected by Kazakhstan, as was the case with all other Central Asian states, save Turkmenistan.

After gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan started to attract and support the ethnic Kazak immigration to Kazakhstan from abroad. Some 4.5 million<sup>130</sup> ethnic Kazaks live outside the republic and are spread among Afghanistan, Mongolia, China, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia. The repatriation of Kazaks living abroad has been regarded as a vital policy for the improvement of demographic disbalance in the country. The government allotted special funds, provided housing and employment, and, for Kazaks from Mongolia even provided transportation of livestock.<sup>131</sup> Between 1991 and 1996, officially 154,941 ethnic Kazaks immigrated to Kazakhstan: 84,828 (or 55 %) coming from Russia; 65,126 (40 %) from Mongolia; 4,617 from Iran; and the

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<sup>127</sup> Barsamov, p. 298.

<sup>128</sup> Dokuchayeva, "Vse yazyki ravny."

<sup>129</sup> *Panorama*, No:24, 19 June 2000.

<sup>130</sup> "Kazakhs Return to the Steppe," *Economist*, 3 April 1999, Vol. 351, Issue 8113, p. 54.

<sup>131</sup> Sally N. Cumming, "The Kazakhs: Demographics, Disporas, and 'Return'," in Charles King and Neil J. Melvin, *Nations Abroad: Dispora Politics and International Relations of the Former Soviet Union*, Boulder, Colorado, 1998, p. 143; cited by Charles King and Melvin J. Neil, "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia," *International Security*, Vol. 24, Issue 3 (Winter 1999-2000), p. 128.

remainder from China, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.<sup>132</sup> According to the Migration and Demographic Agency of Kazakhstan, from 1992 to January 1, 1998, about 39,500 families, or 170,000 ethnic Kazaks moved from abroad.<sup>133</sup> The leader of the Slavic movement *LAD*, Aleksandra Dokuchayeva, stated that the Kazak officials desperately kept secret the real migration statistics, both incoming and outgoing,<sup>134</sup> implying that the government figures for the number of out-going Russians was lower than actual number. Government support for newcomers Kazaks and the special assistance provided to them was criticized by the Russian community of Kazakhstan who was displeased by their current social status. Along with privileged status in obtaining Kazak citizenship, the Kazaks from abroad have a right to dual citizenship that caused severe discontent by Kazakstani Russians, who were refused dual Kazak-Russian citizenship. According to the 1992 Law on State Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "all Kazakhs who were forced to leave the territory of the Republic and reside in other states have the right to Kazakstani citizenship at the same time as citizenship of other states."<sup>135</sup> The immigration law of the republic favouring ethnic Kazaks was also criticized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Peter van Knieker.<sup>136</sup>

The repatriated Kazaks, and especially those from non-USSR countries, like China, Mongolia, and Turkey, are more strongly bound to the Kazak language and tradition, are understood to be more nationalistic than those living in Kazakhstan. As means of Kazak nation-building and in order to improve the overpopulation of Russians in northern districts, the newly repatriated Kazak families were distributed among northern and eastern provinces, as well as to big cities with large Russian population.

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> "Kazakhstan: Decrease in Kazakhstan's Population Reported," *ITAR-TASS*, 14:30 GMT, 12 December 1998; in *FBIS-TEN-98-346*, 12 December 1998.

<sup>134</sup> Dokuchayeva, "Trevozhnye tendentsii," p. 77.

<sup>135</sup> *The Law on State Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Almaty, 1992; cited by Barsamov, p. 296.

Interestingly, no Kazak family from Mongolia was settled in Chimkent, one of the most Kazak-populated cities.

In addition to the ethnic Kazak immigration policy, the Kazak government launched new policies to improve the ethnic favouritism. The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan allows the heads of local administration to be appointed by the president, not 'allowing' Russians to get the majority in the Russian-predominated northern region. Also, regions (*oblasts*) were reshaped so that Russian-predominated regions were bound to one or two Kazak-predominated regions, thus making Russians impotent in elections. For example, the Russian populated former capital Almaty was incorporated with the Kazak populated Taldı-Korgan into the Almaty oblast. The most radical change the demographic distribution was the decision to move the capital from Almaty to Akmola, which was renamed later to Astana. As Denis Lomov has argued, the idea of moving the capital intended to "obstruct the legitimate reunification of Russian South Siberia with Russia."<sup>137</sup> Of course, there were several practical reasons in moving the capital northward: the northern capital is closer to the industrial and resource-rich regions of the republic; it is farther from China and the terrain of conflicts, such as Afghanistan and Tajikistan;<sup>138</sup> it also makes the transportation routes between the center and periphery shorter and more efficient. But the most important outcome of the decision was its improvement of the ethnic disbalance in the north of the country. After becoming the capital, a small city Akmola, attracted a great number of migrants, mostly from the Kazak-populated south. In addition to the state administration -ministries, governmental organizations, parliament, state banks, all with their personnel and their families- the project of reconstruction of the new capital, worth nearly \$10 billion,<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Barsamov, pp. 307-308.

<sup>137</sup> Lomov.

<sup>138</sup> "Aaarghmola," *Economist*, 26 July 1997, Vol. 344, Issue 8027, p.52.

<sup>139</sup> Lomov.



created great economic opportunities, again involving ethnic Kazaks from the south. By 1997, about \$1 billion had already been spent for the new capital.<sup>140</sup> Nazarbayev stated "The youth and new generations of Kazakhs will appreciate the necessity of moving the capital from Almaty to Akmola for the development of the country."<sup>141</sup>

The governmental policy of attracting Kazaks living outside the republic became a secondary concern with a great out-migration of non-Kazaks, especially Russians, starting in the 1990s.<sup>142</sup> By January 1, 1998, some 2.2 million people had left the country, 1.2 million of whom had migrated to Russia.<sup>143</sup> Although the republic's population had decreased by 940,000 and dropped to 15.6 millions,<sup>144</sup> the share of ethnic Kazaks considerably increased since independence. Even without the great emigration of non-Kazaks and the immigration of ethnic Kazaks from abroad, the Kazak natural birth-rate and the number of children in a family is sizeably higher among Kazaks: more than 80 % of all teenagers are Kazaks.<sup>145</sup> It is obvious for Kazaks that "time and demography are ultimately on their side."<sup>146</sup> Irina Zviagelskaia asserts, that

The migration of Russians from the republics of Central Asia was to a considerable extent a natural event. ...Accustomed to being under the patronage of the state, they showed a low degree of political organization and social solidarity and therefore felt defenceless in the new, unexpectedly foreign countries.<sup>147</sup>

Most of the Russians leaving the republic were skilled industrial personnel. Their immigration to Russia did not cause any social or economic discontent, especially in scarcely populated regions of the Russian Federation. But the presence of Russians in Kazakhstan could provide Russia with leverage to influence the republic's policy.

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> "Kazakhstan: President Nazarbayev Defends Decision to Move Kazakh Capital to Akmola," *Interfax*, 12:50 GMT, 8 December 1997; in *FBIS-SOV-97-343*.

<sup>142</sup> King and Neil, "Diaspora Politics."

<sup>143</sup> "Kazakhstan: Decrease in Population. "

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 61; and Dannreuther, pp. 43-44.

<sup>146</sup> Dannreuther, pp. 43-44.

<sup>147</sup> Zviagelskaia, pp. 13-14.

Therefore, Russia has to be concerned with the protection of civil rights of local Russians to encourage them stay.<sup>148</sup>

On the other hand, the growing Kazak sentiment bolstered by the incipient Kazak economic elite, forces Nazarbayev to conduct a policy favouring the Kazaks. Olcott argues that "Nazarbayev's policy is especially delicate because Kazakhstan's large Russian population requires him to portray the republic as a secular, multinational entity rather than as a Central Asian one of Turkic and Muslim pedigree."<sup>149</sup> But today he himself is 'obliged' to pronounce the national and religious facet of the nation in order to prevent the rise of any nationalistic or religious parties. Also, Kazakstani Russians are aware of the fact that "any successor of Nazarbayev is likely to be more 'Kazakh', and thus less sympathetic to their concerns."<sup>150</sup> Therefore, the position of Nazarbayev is far to become delicate, even because of Russians. Even some of the Cossack organizations, the most extreme para-military Russian groupings in Kazakhstan, agreed on the idea of emigration to Russia. For example, the Ataman of the Semirechye Cossack Union, Vladimir Ovsyannikov, asserted that some 150,000 Cossacks wished to leave for Russia.<sup>151</sup> As a response to criticism, Nazarbayev stated that there was no such 'Russian problem' in Kazakhstan; Russians were leaving solely by their own will- for their historical motherland or in search of higher wages- and not because they were displeased with the policy of the Kazak government.<sup>152</sup> As one analyst has argued the government-controlled media in Kazakhstan deliberately denigrates the situation in Russia, while concealing socio-economic problems of their own by strict censorship.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, the created "ethnicity, which formed a statehood, but did not have any

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>149</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Kazakhstan," in Mesbahi (ed.), *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p. 138.

<sup>150</sup> Olcott, "Post-Soviet Kazakhstan."

<sup>151</sup> "Cossacks View Repatriation Differently," *Interfax*, 14:57 GMT, 10 August 1999; in *FBIS-SOV-1999-0810*.

national interests within its framework,"<sup>154</sup> is likely to become gradually a real 'Kazak' state.

### **3. Kazakhstan and regions of Russia**

Kazakhstan's relations with the regions of the Russian Federation are mostly based on economic matters. After the collapse of the USSR and the *de facto* disruption of inter-Soviet economic ties which hampered Kazakhstani industry, it was necessary to revive former economic linkages to make Kazak industrial plants function again. It was even more vital for the north of Kazakhstan, whose industry was deeply dependent on that of Southern Siberia of Russia. Another important question was the legal and economic facilities provided for Kazakhstani Russian emigrants, a great number of whom moved to Russian regions neighbouring Kazakhstan.

As a delicate mode of its foreign policy, Kazakhstan emphasized only the economic aspects of relations. As a rule the Kazak government did not focus on the ethnic or religious features of a region or an autonomous republic and Kazakhstan always shows its inevitable respect to Russia's territorial integrity. As Laumulin notes, the possible disintegration of the Russian Federation and instability caused by it would directly affect the situation in northern Kazakhstan and make the Russian security guarantees on Kazakhstan dubious.<sup>155</sup>

Initially, the Kazak government was anxious about the strengthening of relations with Russian regions, especially ethnically Russian neighbouring ones, for fear of separatism in Kazakhstan. In January 1993, Leonid Polezhayev, the governor of Omsk, the biggest Russian city close to Kazak border, organized a bilateral meeting of Russian

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<sup>152</sup> Viktor Shelgunov, "Akayev vykhodit iz-pod vliyaniya svoiyaka," *Tsentrāl'noaziyatskiy byulleten'* (IAC Eurasia), 29 May 2000.

<sup>153</sup> Petrov, "Russkiye v Kazakhstane."

<sup>154</sup> Ayaganov and Kuandykov, "Kazakhi v Kazakhstane."

and Kazak regional heads, which he called "integration from below."<sup>156</sup> But the incipient attempts for regional integration was resisted by Kazakhstan following the involvement of Siberian Cossacks located in Omsk in separatist movements in Kazakhstan. In early February 1995, an agreement on cooperation of the border oblasts of Russia and Kazakhstan was signed in Omsk.<sup>157</sup> The agreement intended integration in the field of economics not only with the Omsk region, but comprises nine northern oblasts of Kazakhstan, the Altay Republic, *Altay Kray*, and ten *oblasts* of Russia. One of the most important issues regulated by the agreement was the "simplification of the rules of migration for the inhabitants of above mentioned oblasts and a 'simplified procedure for acquiring citizenship by citizens of the Russian Federation who have come for permanent residence to Kazakhstan, and by citizens of Kazakhstan who have come to permanent residence to Russia'."<sup>158</sup> The agreement has important meaning in solving the several legal and economic obstacles for ethnic Russian emigrants, by facilitating emigration to Russia.

The Republic of Kazakhstan also supports relations with the republics of the Russian Federation. Using their 'right' to establish limited external relations, 'diplomatic' representatives from the republics of the Russian Federation, such as the republics of Tatarstan and Sakha (Yakutia), opened diplomatic missions in Kazakhstan. Among the republics of the Russian Federation, Tatarstan enjoys a special place for Kazakhstan both due to the close ethnic and linguistic kinship between the Kazaks and Volga Tatars and because of the highly-industrialized economy of Tatarstan, especially its oil-refineries and machine-building sectors. An agreement signed on August 25, 1997, intended to expand bilateral trade and economic cooperation, which by that time amounted to \$60

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<sup>155</sup> Laumulin, p. 33.

<sup>156</sup> Neil Melvin, *Regional Foreign Policies in the Russian Federation*, London, 1995, p. 20.

<sup>157</sup> "Twenty Russian, Kazakh Oblasts Agree on Border Economic Zone," *Roskiyskaya gazeta*, 1 February 1995, p. 7; in *FBIS-SOV-95-028-S*.

million annually.<sup>159</sup> During the official inauguration of Astana, Tatar President Mintimir Shaymiyev was received alongside with other presidents of the CIS countries.

#### **4. Current trends in Russo-Kazak relations**

##### **A. From the CIS to the 'Eurasian Union'**

In March 1994, president Nazarbayev proposed the establishment of the so-called 'Eurasian Union'-*yevraziyskiy soyuz*- upon the inability of the CIS to revive as a stable base of integration. Nazarbayev had presented his 'brilliant idea' everywhere and with every possible occasion. Nazarbayev presented his idea of the Eurasian Union everywhere, so if the idea succeeded it might make him the Jean Monet of Eurasia.

The new union was to include free trade and common economic institutions, but the most important aspect was a common citizenship.<sup>160</sup> Nazarbayev inaugurated the idea of the Eurasian Union in his speech to the academic staff of the Moscow State University on March 29, 1994.<sup>161</sup> The kernel of the Eurasian Union Treaty would be the establishment of the supranational organs obliged to coordinate economic, defence, and foreign policy of the former Soviet states through establishment of the Council of State Heads and Government, the Council of Defence Ministers, and the Council of Foreign Ministers.<sup>162</sup> Another aspect of the new Union that made it different from the CIS would be direct election for Common Parliament to coordinate legislative action of the member states of the prospective Union.<sup>163</sup> In September 1994, Kazakhstan organized and hosted an international conference on "the Eurasian Space: Using Integration

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan and Tatarstan to Expand Trade, Economic Cooperation," *Interfax*, 14:26, 25 August 1997; in *FBIS-SOV-97-237*.

<sup>160</sup> Liz Fuller, *RFE/RL Daily Report*, No. 57, 23 March 1994; and Ben Brown, *RFE/RL Daily Report*, No. 201, 21 October 1994; both cited by Henry Hale, "Commentary on Kazakhstan," in Alexei Arbatov et al. (eds.), p. 338.

<sup>161</sup> Tokayev, p. 87.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

Potential," following which President Nazarbayev sent a draft proposal on the Eurasian Union to all leaders of the CIS.<sup>164</sup>

Nazarbayev pointed out that the 17 agreements signed in Moscow January 20, 1995, comprising certain issues on military and economic cooperation, citizenship, and a customs union, were the first evidence that "the Eurasian Union has now started being implemented in practice."<sup>165</sup> But the eagerness and endeavour of Nazarbayev to create the Eurasian Union was not welcomed by most of the CIS countries and was even regarded as a genius trick of astute Kazak diplomacy. First and foremost, the new idea could return Nazarbayev to his former prestige and respectability. It had been argued that by proposing the idea of a new union, he intended to buy some extra time to keep stability in the republic.<sup>166</sup> According to Barsamov, the proposal intended to gain support for Nazarbayev from the republic's Russian population; i.e., it had a domestic policy meaning.<sup>167</sup> Another argument considering Kazak intention says that a union involving common citizenship could easily avoid the problem of dual citizenship proposed by Kazakstani Russians and could enable Nazarbayev to "confront the internal problem of the non-Kazaks in his country by blaming Russia for hesitating to integrate."<sup>168</sup>

In fact, it is really hard to imagine that the skilful diplomat and politician Nazarbayev had been sincerely hopeful that the Eurasian Union would come into being, at a time when it was obvious that even a weaker union as the CIS was far from reaching its goals and in the edge of collapse. The Eurasian Union certainly provided extra time for Nazarbayev to create a national state while he helped to avoid serious

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<sup>164</sup> "Nazarbayev Views Eurasian Union at Conference," *ITAR-TASS*, 15:51 GMT, 19 September 1994; in *FBIS-SOV-94-182*; and Belokrenitsky, p. 56.

<sup>165</sup> *FF 0193- B-WIRE*, 23:31:36, 20 January 1995.

<sup>166</sup> Hale, p. 338.

<sup>167</sup> Barsamov, p.321.

<sup>168</sup> Belokrenitsky, p. 57.

damage either in foreign or domestic policy, and further providing a basis for any kind of regional rapprochement on his own terms. It is interesting that later in 1997 he stated that the most vital issue was the "real integration among member countries of the Commonwealth, Russia, *China*, and the *entire Eurasian continent*" (emphasis added),<sup>169</sup> thus for the first time meaning an integration that did not correspond to the former Soviet territories. In his recent interview to *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, Nazarbayev said that he still adhered to his ideas about the EAU and that he meant integration resembling to that of the European Union.<sup>170</sup>

## **B. Russian-Belarus Union and Kazakstan**

Another development in post-Soviet Space that directly influenced the CIS was the declaration of a union state between Russia and Belarus, which deprived Nazarbayev of the title as the greatest integrator and sizeably changed his political inclination. The idea of a union state emerged with the election of Alyaksandr Lukashenka, formerly a parliamentary deputy, the president of Belarus since July 1994.<sup>171</sup> Following his coming to power, Lukashenka started to widen his power by suppressing and eliminating his opponents. He started he to realize his great aspirations of the union of the republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation. Therefore, within a short period he created a real dictatorship as a way to maintain his notorious claims. By a constitutional referendum held on November 25, 1996,<sup>172</sup> Lukashenka created a legitimate base for his absolute autocracy and the establishment of a union state with Russia.

The establishment of a union state also seemed to provide certain advantages for Russia, such as the free usage of Belarussian military sites, its early warning radar

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<sup>169</sup> "Kazakhstan: Government for Comprehensive Integration With Russia," *ITAR-TASS*, 20:08 GMT, 24 April 1997; in *FBIS-SOV-97-114*.

<sup>170</sup> "Nursultan Nazarbayev: My za mnogopolyusnyi mir," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 February 2000.

<sup>171</sup> "Alyaksandr Lukashenka: Europe's Odd Man Out," *Economist*, 25 July 98, Vol. 348, Issue 8078, p. 51.

<sup>172</sup> Peter Ford, "The World's Latest Pariah: Belarus Moves to One-Man Rule After Vote," *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 November 1996, Vol. 89, Issue 2; in *EBSCOhost*.

systems, and its military factories, which directly affect Russia's security. Also, Russia gained an absolute ally in international organizations and a buffer zone against the NATO expansion eastward. Thereby, the idea of a union state was wholeheartedly supported by Vladimir Zhirinovsky and his Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), while most Russian democrats remained cool to the idea. But when the Communists and pro-Sovietists, led by Gennadiy Zyuganov, emerged as a primary challenge to Yeltsin's rule, the latter supported the idea in order to gain the favour of USSR-nostalgists. The integration process was mostly based on economic and military matters and many agreements had been signed, including one for cancelling mutual debts, but still most of treaties, especially on economic issues, remained on paper and had not been implemented.

The Kazak government and President Nazarbayev, formerly the 'number one' supporter and initiator of any kind of integration among the former-USSR states, did not propose the idea of joining the Russian-Belarus Union, as it happened in December 1991. However, some pro-Russian movements in Kazakhstan widely supported the idea of unification and even proposed a referendum on the matter. Nazarbayev, in an interview to a Russian newspaper, commented on the matter:

Unification of states in an union state or any other form is the business of these states and peoples. And it should be concerned with understanding and respect to their choice. ...But if it is to turn into some kind of return to the former-USSR, then it is inadmissible for the CIS countries. ... Today, for Kazakhstan the matter of joining the union is out of agenda anyway. We suggest that our current alliance level of relations with Russia and Belarus within the framework of the Customs Union is adequate for our national interests and objective conditions of the historical moment.<sup>173</sup>

While the two countries were involved in a unification process, other CIS countries, and Kazakhstan particularly, were concerned with their own economies seeking external financial aid and cooperation, especially after the 'August 17' financial crisis in Russia and its inability to afford the financial burden of the unification with Belarus. Along

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<sup>173</sup> "Nursultan Nazarbayev: My za mnogopolyusnyi mir."



with the economic dimension, two other important reasons kept Kazakhstan out of the union. First, the anti-Western policy launched by Lukashenka caused the deprivation of Western aid to Belarus and making it a 'rogue state'. Therefore, establishing close relations with Belarus, not to mention unification, might make Kazakhstan an unfavourable state for the West, since the country had already a bad image due to its human rights violations and anti-democratic sanctions. Second, the Slavic emphasis of the union, which became even stronger by the 'admission' of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the union, not only deflated non-Slavic states of the CIS, but also disillusioned non-Russian republics of the Russian Federation; Tatarstan and Bashkortostan also condemned the pro-Serb policy of Russia during the Kosovo crisis. Mintimir Shaymiyev, the president of Tatarstan, stated that in the case of the creation of a union state his republic would insist on the same status as Belarus.<sup>174</sup>

The union state of Belarus and Russia officially created by the Union Treaty, signed by both presidents in December 1999, made the CIS unfunctional. Seeing that the two countries, closest ethnically and linguistically and most willing to unification could not really implement their agreements and make any practical progress, the CIS countries became disappointed in the possibility of integration among the CIS countries and in Russia's real potential. Meanwhile, the growing national consciousness and acclimation to their independence distanced the states, as was seen during the Kosovo crisis, when none of the newly independent states, except Kirghizstan, audibly protested against NATO operations.

### **C. Russian foreign policy after the Chechnia crisis**

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<sup>174</sup> Mikhail Portnikov, "A Year of the Soviet Union," *Kiev Zerkalo Nedeli*, 11 January 99; in *FBIS-SOV-99-013*.

After the 'Eurasianists', arguing that "Russia's natural and traditional allies were in the South rather than in the West,"<sup>175</sup> started to form Russian foreign policy (especially after Yevgeniy Primakov became the foreign minister and later the Prime Minister), it was expected that Russia would increase its imperial claims over Kazakhstan and would support separatism in the north of the republic. But the Chechen crisis emerged as the declaration of the independence of Chechnia under the leadership of Dudayev (who lived for a long period in Kazakhstan after his family was deported in 1944) could not be turned down and later turned into a full-fledged war. The wide-spread rhetoric of the Russian commanding staff about the purging of the Chechen territories from 'a couple of terrorist bunches' had caused a humiliating defeat of the Russian army and the signing of a truce in 1996 at Hasavyurt. Heavy casualties of the Russian army and enormous financial spending caused despair among Russian politicians and seriously damaged the former image of the great military power of Russia. In addition, Chechnia, there are other Muslim-populated republics of the Russian Federation, some of which reached a high level of economic development. The most important 'card' the Chechen leadership relied on was Islam. Any further armed conflict between Russia and its Muslim subjects would certainly be supported by Chechens. For Russia, it would be even more unaffordable to launch another war within the borders of the Russian Federation, not to mention one with the Central Asian republics, which have larger population, national armies, and direct or transitional borders with other Muslim states, such as Iran and Afghanistan.

Since the 'first' Chechen war Russia seemed assert the principles of 'indivisibility of borders' and 'territorial integrity' as the corner-stone of its domestic and foreign policy (which naturally includes marking terrorism, radical Islam, and separatism as the arch

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<sup>175</sup> Amin Saikal, "Russia and Central Asia," in Amin Saikal and William Maley (eds.), p. 143.

enemies of the statehood). In the same mood, Russia refrained from audible support of ethnic Russian separatism in northern Kazakhstan and from threats of using military power 'if needed', this time emphasizing human rights violations and language rights. As Ronald Dannreuther has stated, Russia would support amicable Kazak-Russian relations and avoid serious tensions since "increased hostility could act as a catalyst for a deterioration of Russian relations with the Turkic Central Asian peoples, many of whom live within the borders of the Russian Federation."<sup>176</sup>

Upon the outburst of the 'second' Chechen war, President Nazarbayev condemned separatism and terrorism and stated that "the events taking place within Russia's sovereign territory should be regarded as Russia's internal affair,"<sup>177</sup> while also stating that both sides, the Chechen Republic and the Russian Federation, did not implement the 1996 agreement. In 1996, the Chechen government preferred Nazarbayev to Shaymiyev and Ruslan Khasbulatov as the mediator at the peace talks,<sup>178</sup> despite his reaffirmation that the crisis was Russia's internal matter.

While the Kazak leadership in their official speeches backed Russian operation in Chechnia, there is increasing information of the Kazak involvement in the crisis on the side of the Chechens. The press center of the United Group of Troops had reported about the existence of a Kazak battalion fighting on the Chechen side.<sup>179</sup> Recently, Maj. General Vyacheslav Borisov, deputy commander of the Russian combined federal forces in the North Caucasus, stated that some 300 Chechen militants involved in

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<sup>176</sup> Dannreuther, pp.44-45.

<sup>177</sup> "Kazakh President: Chechnya Internal Russian Issue," *ITAR-TASS*, 12:37 GMT, 7 December 1999; in *FBIS-SOV-1999-1207*.

<sup>178</sup> "Russia: Chechen Government Prefers Nazarbayev as Mediator," *ITAR-TASS*, 17:01 GMT, 11 April 1996; in *FBIS-SOV-96-072*.

<sup>179</sup> "Russia: Kazakh, Azeri Mercenaries Siding with Chechens," *ITAR-TASS*, 12:10 GMT, 3 February 2000; in *FBIS-SOV-2000-0203*.

combat actions are currently receiving medical treatment at a sanatorium in the Eastern-Kazakstan region.<sup>180</sup>

Since the 'first' Chechen war and the signing of the truce, which postponed the consideration of the republic's final status, Chechnia, in fact, became the genuine 'near abroad'. Since both Russia and the newly independent peoples started to become accustomed to their independence, Russia seems that it abandoned the notion of the so-called 'near abroad' or at least the term has become pronounced more seldomly in official statements. Anatoliy Adamishin, formerly the minister of the CIS affairs, recently stated that "the CIS countries are as independent as others and relations with them should be built while really and critically evaluating their policy. Finally, Finland and the USA (there is a 16 km-long distance between Alaska and Russia) are no less 'near abroad' than Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan."<sup>181</sup> Relations between Russia and Kazakstan seem to have quit the former role of 'mighty elder brother- younger brother' while Kazakstan is getting accustomed to its independence. Recently, the Kazak parliament rejected the agreement on the usage of military test-sites on the territory of Kazakstan by Russia. In the meantime, the Kazak border troops seized confiscated the Russian ships that fished in the Kazak sector of the Caspian Sea. Also, the Kazak government claimed possession of the Khvalynskoe oil-deposits which was recently exploited by the Russian LUK-Oil.<sup>182</sup> After neighbouring Kirghizstan's parliament gave the Russian language the status of official language alongside with Kirghiz (where Russians constitute only 13 % of the population), the same gesture was expected from the Kazak leadership, but the latter refused even to consider the matter. During his first

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<sup>180</sup> "Kazakh Official Denies Chechen Rebel Receiving Medical Treatment in Kazakhstan," *Interfax*, 10:12 GMT, 22 June 2000; in *FBIS-SOV-2000-0622*.

<sup>181</sup> "Kazakhstan vkhodit v chislo stran, gde pritesnyayut russkikh sootcheststvennikov," *El. Pochta* (IAC Eurasia), 16 June 2000.

<sup>182</sup> Viktor Shelguyov, "Nazarbayev idyet va-bank," *Tsentral'noaziyatskiy byulleten'* (IAC Eurasia), 16 June 2000.

official visit to Moscow after Putin officially became president in March 2000, Nazarbayev proposed to create a special *Fund* for the Protection of the Russian language in *Former Soviet Space*, which was accepted by Vladimir Putin.<sup>183</sup> But still it would be only a 'fund' comprising the whole 'former Soviet space' and would have no binding or legal instructions. Another important step toward real independence was the Kazak withdrawal from the CIS Visa agreement starting from February 1, 2000 which stipulated that "citizens holding the passports of other CIS member countries will need Kazakh visas for transit via Kazakhstan."<sup>184</sup>

Since Putin came to power in Russia, the Ministry of the CIS Affairs has been dissolved and a department within the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs was charged with dealing with the matter. While not everything has changed, economic matters are gaining primary importance in bilateral relations. Today Russian mass media often mentions Kazak dependency on Russian oil-pipelines as a bargaining chip for the improvement of the Russians' rights in the republic. It has become now it is really unusual to hear any proposal for Russian military pressure on Kazakhstan- save some Western authors -as was often spoken previously. Recently, an interesting proposal was mentioned in a Russian newspaper on the solving of the problem of Russians living in Kazakhstan: the author offered to sell the disputed Kuril Islands to Japan and proposed to buy a part of northern Kazakhstan instead.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Kazakh News*, 21 June 2000.

<sup>184</sup> "CIS Citizens Need Transit Visas from 1 Feb," *ITAR-TASS*, 18: 44 GMT, 12 January 2000; in *FBIS-SOV-2000-0112*.

<sup>185</sup> Sergey Pavlenko, "Kak spasti Rossiyu," *Sibirskiy kalendar'*, No. 14 (26), 04 April 2000.

## CHAPTER II: KAZAKSTAN AND REGIONAL STATES

### 1. Kazakhstan and Central Asia

#### A. Kazak- Uzbek relations

##### a. Struggle for Central Asian leadership

Throughout the Soviet history Kazakhstan has been regarded as a geographical and historical extension of Southern Siberia. While the rest of Central Asia was named *Srednyaya aziya* (Middle Asia), the term *Srednyaya aziya i Kazakhstan* (Middle Asia and Kazakhstan) became used to denote the whole Soviet Central Asia. Historically, the area that is now Kazakhstan fell under the Tsarist rule about a century earlier than so-called Middle Asia and started to be integrated into the imperial economy and administration. The Kazak Khanate was established by Janibek and Geray Khans, two sons of Barak Khan, in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and encompassed the seceded tribes and families which formerly belonged to the state of Nomadic Uzbeks under Abulhayr Khan (the grandfather of Shaybani Khan, the founder of the Shaybanide state), when the state of Abulkhayr was severely weakened by the invasion of Jungars.

From the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Kazak Khanate was a unified political entity. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the khanate broke up and was divided into several separate khanates. According to Muhammed Haydat Dughlat, the Kazak Khanate was founded in Hijra 870 (1465-1466), and the number of Kazaks under the rule of Janibek and Geray reached 200,000 in 1468.<sup>186</sup> From its establishment until its elimination, the Kazak Khanate was a rival to the Khiva and Khokand khanates, remnants of the Uzbek state, committing several wars against them causing many territories passed from one side to another.

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<sup>186</sup> Mirza Haydar Dughlat, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi: A History of the Hans of Moghulistan*, Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures: 38, Massachussetts, 1996, p. 154, cited by Meryem Kirimli, *The Genesis of Kazak Nationalism and Independent Kazakhstan: a History of Native Reactions to Russian-Soviet Policies*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Bilkent University, Ankara, 1999, p.26.

The Central Asian republics have lots of things in common: common history and ties, common problems of independent state-building, and a perceived common threat of Russia. At the beginning of their 'independent career' they operated harmoniously within the CIS by coordinating their actions. With the consolidation of their state independence and the all-powerful local leaderships, however, the harmony among the Central Asian republics turned into harsh rivalries, although their official rhetoric of 'eternal brotherhood' was not lost. The Central Asian republics might still use any possibility to hamper the other Central Asian states' promotion, but there are certain vulnerabilities that still force them to cooperate: their political opposition (it is impossible to hear any criticism about the lack of democracy from any leader of these states about the other), radical Islam, drug trafficking, and, of course, the Russian threat— though the priorities for every state are different. All these states are still dependent on Russia, either politically or economically or both, and they are in a severe competition for Russian and Western aid and investment.

Among the five Central Asian states, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are the most influential ones with regard to their populations, economic and military power, demographic compound, and geography. The population of each of the two states is greater than that of the rest of Central Asia. By July 1995, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had populations of 17.4 and 23.1 million respectively and their GDP amounted to 55.2 and 54.5 billion dollars, and their armed forces had 40,000 and 25,000 of manpower.<sup>187</sup> Another feature that made Uzbekistan very influential in the region was its demographic structure: it has a relatively homogeneous population where Uzbeks represent more than 75%<sup>188</sup> of the whole population, as well as considerable Uzbek minorities in all other

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<sup>187</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 1995; and *International Institute of Strategic Studies* 1995; both cited by Roeder, p. 231.

<sup>188</sup> Dmitry Trofimov, "Regional Preeminence in Central Asia," *Priism-A Monthly on the Post-Soviet States*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Part 4 (February 2000), The Jamestone Foundation.

Central Asian republics. Under these circumstances, the two countries compete for leadership in the region, where Kazakhstan initiated of regional cooperation and integration as a means to counterbalance its vulnerability vis-à-vis Russia. Kirghizstan, with its large Uzbek minority and several zones of dispute, tried to counterbalance the Uzbek threat under an umbrella comprising the whole region. Turkmenistan, with its small population and rich natural resources, tried to avoid any kind of integration in order not to fall under Uzbek or Kazak influence. The struggle among these two countries also formed the two leaders, presidents Nazarbayev and Karimov: whereas the former became the innovator of any ideas of cooperation, the latter consistently rejected them.<sup>189</sup> For the most part, Kazakhstan's initiatives to create a 'Central Asian Union' was a response to Russian endeavours in Belarus and Ukraine. In addition, Kazakhstan's cooperation with the Central Asian states had been its first experience of 'external' cooperation without Russian supervision.

The first meeting of the Central Asian leaders took place in Almaty on June 23, 1990, when then the First Secretary of the Kazak Communist Party, Nursultan Nazarbayev, invited the Communist leaders of the Central Asian republics: Niyazov of Turkmenistan, Mahkamov of Tajikistan, Karimov of Uzbekistan, and Masaliyev of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>190</sup> Following the collapse of the USSR, the newly independent regional states increased cooperation attempts, such as in December 1991 in a response to the Slavic Union. At a June 1990 summit, regional councils met to solve common problems of cultural, scientific, and environmental matters, which formed the first serious stage of institutionalizing regional cooperation. Another meeting of the Central Asian leaders was held in Ashkabad, on December 12, 1991.<sup>191</sup> The participation of Azerbaijan gave

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<sup>189</sup> Hunter, p. 93.

<sup>190</sup> *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, 25 June 1990; cited by Olcott, *CANS*, p. 52.

<sup>191</sup> Hunter, p. 108.



the meeting a Turkic-Muslim atmosphere, but the ongoing war with Armenia hampered the latter's cooperation with Central Asia.

One of the most important meetings among the regional powers was held in early January 1993 in Tashkent, where the term *Tsentral'naya aziya* (Central Asia) was formally adopted to name the Central Asian states including Kazakhstan, instead of *Srednyaya aziya i Kazakhstan* (Middle Asia and Kazakhstan).<sup>192</sup> One of the most important conclusions of the meeting was the creation of a common market and a plan to coordinate economic policies.<sup>193</sup> The next stage of regional cooperation was launched mainly by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with Kyrgyzstan's indispensable participation in every project. Turkmenistan followed its policy of 'neutralism' and Tajikistan ran into a civil war with Russia's instigation and support. In January 1994, the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed bilateral agreements on the creation of a common market, the abolishment of customs check-points, and free border crossing for their citizens.<sup>194</sup> Later that year Kyrgyzstan also joined the 'Kazak-Uzbek Union' and the trilateral agreement was signed on April 30, 1994.<sup>195</sup> During the Almaty summit held on June 8, 1994, the three countries established an Interstate Council, an Executive Committee and founded the Council of Prime Ministers, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the Council of Defence Ministers.<sup>196</sup> On July 8, 1994, the participants established the Central Asian Bank for Cooperation and Development facilitating interstate fiscal transactions. But in reality, most of these gestures of ardent friendship and cooperation simply remained on paper and the two republics followed independent paths: Uzbekistan was more concerned with its domestic 'Islamist' opposition and

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<sup>192</sup> Belokrenitsky, p. 51; and Olcott, *CANS*, p. 55.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> "Nazarbayev Ratifies Agreement with Uzbekistan," *FBIS-SOV-94-050*, 15 March 1994, p. 39; cited by Hunter, p. 102-103.

<sup>195</sup> Tokayev, p. 95.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

actively 'participated' in the Tajik-Afghan crisis, while Kazakhstan continued its 'integrationist' policy and nation-building process. Not surprisingly, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan did not participate in Nazarbayev's conference on Eurasian Union organized in Almaty.<sup>197</sup> Also, the Uzbek side hesitated with regard to the idea of Central Asian trilateral integration after the marriage of Nazarbayev's youngest daughter and Akayev's son.

#### **b. Long-lasting tradition: the border issue**

One of the most vulnerable issues between the Central Asian states is that of their borders. This issue can be considered a legacy of the Soviet period, which created them artificially with no regard to prevalent ethnic, geographical, or economic conditions. In addition to these borders, some purely artificial ethnicities had been created, such as the Karakalpaks, whose titular land was initially a part of the Kazak ASSR. It later was transferred to the RSFSR, and had finally been incorporated into Uzbekistan as the Karakalpak ASSR in 1936. The border disputes between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had been exacerbated by their status during Soviet times: the borders were simply the domestic administrative lines between the two Soviet republics and were prone to be changed, since none were demarcated nor delineated.

On June 24, 1992, the two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. The treaty guarantees the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs and does "recognize and respect territorial integrity and inviolability of existing borders between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and denounce any kind of encroachment on these borders. Any establishment and change of the state

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<sup>197</sup> "Nazarbayev: Eurasian Union Meets CIS Interests," *Interfax*, 16:36 GMT, 20 Sep 1994; in *FBIS-SOV-94-183*.

border regime would be embodied on mutual agreement."<sup>198</sup> The approximate length of the Kazak-Uzbek border is 230 km.<sup>199</sup>

For the last few years, incidents occurred in the border zone have increased and became more violent. The two countries started to increase the number of military troops in this 'friendly zone' increase in drug smuggling and illegal immigration. Only in one month -January 2000- several armed clashes occurred between the border guards of the two countries, sometimes involving local populations, especially in the disputed zone that comprises an area of more than 15,000 hectares.<sup>200</sup>

On January 25, 2000, Uzbek border guards in their armoured personnel carrier penetrated the Kazak territories for 50 km and started to mark out a line of 60 km long<sup>201</sup> (according to *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, they advanced 50 km and delineated a zone of about 22,000 hectares).<sup>202</sup> The Kazak government, in a diplomatic note sent to Tashkent, denoted the occasion as an "invasion of the territory of a sovereign state"<sup>203</sup> and the Kazak Foreign Minister Erlan Idrisov stated that Kazakhstan "will not give up an inch of land."<sup>204</sup> The Kazak side had started its troop positioning in September 1999.<sup>205</sup> Until that time, it was an unguarded zone. Following the incident, both sides started negotiations on the demarcation of the border while both parties continued to increase the number of the border troops and facilities. Upon the note of protest from the Kazak side, the Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov stated that "there are not and will not be any territorial tension between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. ...The subject of

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<sup>198</sup> Tokayev, p. 105.

<sup>199</sup> S. Kozlov, "Astana obvinyayet Tashkent v ekspansii," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, No. 18 (2080), 2 February 2000.

<sup>200</sup> "Na yuge Kazakhstana aktivizirovalis' uzbekskiy spetssluzhby," *Tsentral'noaziatskiy byulleten'*, 9 February 2000.

<sup>201</sup> "Border Trouble," *Economist*, 19 February 2000, Vol. 354, Issue 8158, pp. 43-44.

<sup>202</sup> Kozlov, "Astana obvinyayet."

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Paul Goble, "Kazakhstan: Analysis from Washington- 'Good Fences Make Good Neighbors'," *Turkistan Newsletter* (An on line newsletter and Discussion List on Turkic Peoples), 27 April 2000.

border disputes between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is being 'artificially puffed up' these days, while the issue involves only delimitation and demarcation of the border between the two countries."<sup>206</sup> The border incident that stirred up a diplomatic clash within a couple of days settled down through actual negotiations by bilateral working groups, starting the process of demarcation. According to the Kazak Foreign Minister, by June 2000, 40 km of borderline had already been demarcated.<sup>207</sup> In July 2000, Kazakhstan started negotiations on the delimitation and demarcation of the state border with the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>208</sup> Thus, Kazakhstan started to fulfil one of the most important requirements of an independent state- real and admitted borders. Interestingly, the nationalist Kazak parties, such as *Alash* and *Azat*, which use any possible excuse to criticize and picket the Russian embassy in conflicts involving Russia, did not forward their protests to the Uzbek side after the border accident.<sup>209</sup>

### **c. Kazakhstan and the Kazaks in Uzbekistan**

Another specific feature that makes Kazak- Uzbek relations tense and which exacerbates adequate solution of the border problem is the issue of minorities: the Kazak minority in Uzbekistan and the Uzbek minority in Kazakhstan. As a result of Soviet state-building practice, particularly, the creation of state nationalism, several parts of Kazak territories passed to Uzbekistan, and reciprocally, some Uzbek territories passed to Kazakhstan. Ironically, some territories, such as the Mahta-Aral district,<sup>210</sup> passed from one side to another several times.

According to the 1989 census, some 808,000 Kazaks lived in Uzbekistan and some 332,000 Uzbeks in Kazakhstan; today these numbers are supposed to reach *at least* 1.2

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<sup>205</sup> "Kazakhstan Begins Planned Uzbek Border Troop Location," *Interfax*, 12:24 GMT, 7 September 1999; in *FBIS-SOV-1999-0907*.

<sup>206</sup> "Uzbekistan Strengthens Boundary Guard, but No Territorial Claims," *Turkistan Newsletter* (An on line newsletter and Discussion List on Turkic Peoples), 9 March 2000.

<sup>207</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 22, 02 June 2000.

<sup>208</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 27, 09 July 2000.

million and 400,000 respectively and because of the similar birth-rate among the two societies the ratio is not likely to change.<sup>211</sup> There are considerable Uzbek minorities in all other Central Asian countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. In this regard Kazakhstan seems relatively free of Uzbek influence. In contrast, in Uzbekistan the Kazak minority is more influential. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of Uzbekistani Kazaks migrated to Kazakhstan for permanent residence. The Kazaks in Uzbekistan, the second largest Kazak society abroad after that of China, are spread all over the country, but the largest number of them (more than 500,000) live in Central Uzbekistan (Tashkent Oblast, Tashkent City, Syr-Darya Oblast).<sup>212</sup> A great number of Uzbeks in Kazakhstan live in the Çimkent region amounting to some 280,000 people.<sup>213</sup>

After winning independence, the two countries did not intend to involve these minorities in their foreign policy. Several occasions of clashes between ethnic Kazaks and Uzbeks had been controlled and calmed down by officials. Therefore, the claims of the both sides- Uzbeks' aspirations to incorporate some regions of Southern Kazakhstan, the former territories of the Khokand Khanate, into Uzbekistan and Kazaks' aspirations on Uzbekistan's present capital Tashkent, allegedly the lands of the Kazak *Ulu Jüz* (Great Horde)– were so far not brought forward by the official organs of either country.

#### **B. Tajik- Afghan crisis and 'Radical Islam'**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of the newly independent states started to mark Communism as an impending threat for the former Soviet territories. This attitude provided support for the republics' leadership, either from the West, from Russia or from other former Soviet states especially became the states were severely

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<sup>209</sup> S. Kozlov.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> Trofimov.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Anthony Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics," in Mark Beloff (ed.), *Beyond the Soviet Union: The Fragmentation of Power*, Aldershot, 1997, p. 202.

dependent on external aid during the period of transition. In this regard, Kazakhstan was not an exception. The Kazakh leadership was aware of the fact that without democratization, integration of the state's economy into the world economy, and elimination of an anti-Western orientation of foreign policy the country could not receive foreign aid which was indispensable condition for the leadership's survival. But towards the end of the 1990s the threat of Communism lost its former acuteness and the West became concerned with democratization and human rights, which became the requirements for economic aid. Thus, the task of preventing the spread of 'radical Islam', terrorism, and extremism, building regional stability, and the struggle against drug and arms smuggling would again show the region's key role in the world's stability, help to obtain foreign aid and become a legitimate base for anti-democratic sanctions. In this regard, Afghanistan with its ongoing civil war and Tajikistan, the unstable country in Central Asia, were presented as the cradle of 'Islamic International' and the so-called 'bow of Islamic extremism'. The problem of Islamic extremism, cradled somehow between Russia and the USA, and besides facilitating foreign support provides regional leaders with extra space for autocratic action.

Kazakhstan, due to its remoteness to the areas of tensions and the lack of extremist Islamic tradition and movements, is not as vulnerable as the other Central Asian states to Islamist movement, but it also tries to 'benefit' from the threat. In contrast to Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan is less concerned with and does not actively support the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Its peacekeeping troops in Tajikistan seemed under the jurisdiction of the CIS joint forces and never actively participated in serious combat or operations. T. Akimov asserts that Kazakhstan deals only with the criminal and legal extension of the Afghan crisis and is interested in a stable and

peaceful Afghanistan as an alternative route for its mineral resources to the open sea.<sup>214</sup> The Kazak government has expressed its apprehension about the growth of Islamic extremism on every occasion. Especially after the Russian involvement in Chechnia, it became a motto of Kazak foreign policy. Kazakhstan's attitude towards Islamic extremism, separatism, and terrorism keeps it in good terms with other Central Asian states, which have direct borders with other Islamic states and also leads Russia to tone down the protests against 'persecution' of Russians in Kazakhstan tacit. Kazakhstan tries to present itself to Russia as a shield against drug-trafficking and Islamic extremism, and tells Russia that it should "leave them on their own and do not interfere and they will do everything; only your interference and criticism obstruct their productivity."<sup>215</sup>

The Kazak government supports peaceful resolution of the Afghan war: the then-Kazak Foreign Minister Tokayev stated that Kazakhstan "supports bringing an end to the war in Afghanistan and beginning talks on the resolution of the conflict."<sup>216</sup> In contrast to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan prefers not to condemn the Taliban regime as the reason for bloodshed and seems even to refrain from recognizing the Rabbani government as the sole legitimate power representing Afghanistan by ignoring the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the leadership of Mullah Omar, which controls 90 % of its territory. At the meeting of five Central Asian presidents held in Almaty on February 28, 1997, the Kazak president did not make accusations against the Kandahar regime, as the Uzbek and Tajik presidents did, and no special decision was taken.<sup>217</sup> Recently, after Sergey Yastrzhembskiy, the aide of President Putin, stated that Russia might use preventive air-strikes on Afghanistan, the Kazak president said that there was

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<sup>214</sup> T. Akimov, "Afghanistan: de jure i de facto: Komu vygoden ognennyi Afganistan?" *IA Kabar (Kyrgyzstan)*, 12 June 2000.

<sup>215</sup> "Strany Tsentral'noy azii vnov' dobrovol'no vstupyat v sostav Rossii?" *Radio Liberty*, 26 May 2000; in IAC Eurasia, [www.eurasia.org.ru](http://www.eurasia.org.ru).

<sup>216</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan Says Afghan Conflict Threatens Central Asia," *Interfax*, 14:51 GMT, 24 December 1998; in *FBIS-SOV-98-358*.

no need for such air-strikes.<sup>218</sup> After Yastrzhembskiy's statement, the Taliban government warned Uzbekistan and Tajikistan that they would be held responsible for Russian attacks and threatened to use force against them. According to Erlan Karin, director of the Central Asian Agency of Political Research, it was not surprising that the Taliban threatened to use force in response to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, because "Tajikistan- no matter how we say- is a Russian colony and to some extent-Uzbekistan- under the circumstances of its peculiar relations with Russia, according their alliance in struggle against terrorism and extremism."<sup>219</sup> In February 2000, a plane hijacked by Afghans was permitted to land at Aktöbe (Aktyubinsk) airport in Kazakhstan and was provided with food and fuel before taking off to London.<sup>220</sup>

Today Kazakhstan seems aware of the inevitability of regarding the Taliban government as the factual power in Afghanistan and the fact that it could benefit from a stable Afghanistan, although it participates in 'anti-terrorist' forums under the CIS umbrella (the last of which was held in Almaty on May 19, 2000). In fact, the Afghan war and the spread of extremism are still the most important excuse for the Kazak government to increase its military power without annoying neighbouring states and to regulate the activity of domestic opposition. After 1999, particularly after the border incidents with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan started to modernize and improve the combat ability of its armed forces. In May 1997, the then-Kazak Defense Minister Muhtar Altınbayev stated that Kazakhstan plans in the future "to transfer its army to work on a professional basis."<sup>221</sup> Following the border incident, Kazakhstan intended to increase its

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<sup>217</sup> "Kazakhstan: Central Asian Presidents Concerned on Afghanistan Events," *Interfax*, 21:37 GMT, 28 February 1997; in *FBIS-SOV-97-041*.

<sup>218</sup> "Nikakiye antitalibanskiye udary ne nuzhny- Nazarbayev," *Vremya Po Grinvichu*, 30 May 2000.

<sup>219</sup> "Strany Tsentral'noy azii"

<sup>220</sup> "Border Issue."

<sup>221</sup> "Kazakhstan: Defence Minister: Kazakhstan Aims for Professional Army," *Interfax*, 13:24 GMT, 9 May 1997; in *FBIS-UMA-97-129*.



defence expenditures and provide extra tax privileges for arm producers.<sup>222</sup> The Kazak Defence Ministry ordered a number of the newest Russian military technologies, including several SU-27 and MIG-31 fighters and S-300 air-defence missile systems which started being delivered in 1999. Due to military reforms and new weapon deliveries, Kazakhstan, with its army of only 68,000 personnel became the "most combat capable [country] in Central Asia."<sup>223</sup> In January 2000, Marat Tazhin, Security Council Secretary of the Republic of Kazakhstan, told that Kazakhstan plans to allocate at least 1 % of GDP to defence. Last year's military spending of \$110 million was equal only to 0.86 % of GDP.<sup>224</sup> Beside military deliveries from Russia and privileges granted to domestic weapon producers, Kazakhstan tries to gain support from external powers, especially NATO members. Recently, during the visit of the Kazak Defence Minister Sat Tokpakbayev to the USA, the countries agreed to the joint manoeuvres of the Central Asian Battalion in Kazakhstan in September 2000. Another agreement was signed with the Turkish Defence Ministry in December 1999 and the Turkish side granted \$600,000 unrefundable help for modernizing of communication systems of the Defence Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan.<sup>225</sup> During the infiltration of the Islamic militants in Southern Kyrgyzstan in September 1999, it was reported that the Kazak Air Force bombed the militants' positions. However, the participation of the Kazak forces was denied by the Kazak PM Nurlan Balgımbayev, although he admitted that Kazakhstan provided some help to Kyrgyzstan with equipment and gear.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> "Na yuge Kazakhstana."

<sup>223</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan to Receive Russian Combat Aircraft Missiles," *ITAR-TASS*, 18:20 GMT, 1 February 1999; in *FBIS-TAC-1999-032*.

<sup>224</sup> "Kazakh Mull More Defense Money to Counter Threats," *Reuters*, 20 January 2000; in *Russia Today*, 20 January 2000.

<sup>225</sup> Vladimir Georgiyev, "Rossiya i NATO obustrayvayut Kazakhstanskuyu armiyu," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, No. 243 (2059), 28 December 1999.

<sup>226</sup> "Kazakh Premier Denies Bombing Islamic Militants," *Interfax*, 17:40 GMT, 23 September 1999; in *FBIS-SOV-1999-0923*.

Some of the above mentioned developments and changes have been compiled in a single document, the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which –approved by a presidential decree on February 10, 2000– renewed the former doctrine adopted two years ago. Certain issues that did not take place in the former doctrine have been confirmed in a new one. Interestingly, the doctrine says that "the nearest surroundings of the country might be either potential allies or 'irritants' of the problem of security"; also "excessive quantitative and qualitative increase in military power of some countries" are named among the main threats for the country.<sup>227</sup>

### **C. Kazakhstan and the Caspian Oil**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kazak economy had considerably declined especially because of the drop in the production rate of oil and gas the most important pillars of the Kazak economy. In this regard, petroleum and gas production in the Caspian Sea region became probably the most important source for the state budget and supply of hard currency. Besides practical gains, the existence of rich oil and gas reserves improves the financial credibility of the state and attracts foreign investment. Between 1997 and 1999, \$2.7 billion was directly invested in the oil and gas industry of Kazakhstan.<sup>228</sup> Kazakhstan's rich oil reserves and the existence of several 'prospective' transportation routes grants it some political bargaining power, which the new republic is likely to utilize..

Unlike the rest of its foreign policy, the Caspian oil policy of Kazakhstan presents diverse perspective in international arena: the country seeks close relations with Russia and uses its pipelines as the only functioning export means for now; it encourages cooperation with Western petroleum companies to supply its oil to the world. Also there is possibility of cooperation with regional Asian states, such as Turkey, Iran, and China.

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<sup>227</sup> "Voyennaya doktrina Kazakhstana: armiya poluchit garantirovannoe finansirovaniye," *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 7, February 2000.

Commenting on diversity, Kazak president said that "here we are interested in a practical side of the matter, but not political. Kazakhstan should start the transportation of its oil to the world market as soon and as profitable as possible."<sup>229</sup>

On September 10, 1999, a protocol that confirms the will of two countries regarding the transportation of the Caspian oil via Turkey to the world market was signed in Ankara between this Kazakhstan and Turkey.<sup>230</sup> Alongside with Turkey and Western states, Kazakhstan cooperates with other countries, namely China and Iran, which will be focused on in the following parts of this work.

For Kazakhstan, it is crucial to delineate the dividing water lines in the Caspian Sea as soon as possible; despite mention of a verbal consensus on the matter between the governments of Russia and Kazakhstan.<sup>231</sup> Kazakhstan is anxious about the growth of Russian activity in the region, including investment of \$9 billion to develop petroleum producing infrastructure of its sector.<sup>232</sup> Kazakhstan still claims its rights over the Khvalynskoye deposit in the border zone that was recently explored by Russian *LUK-Oil*. A few months ago the State Customs Committee of the Russian Federation prohibited the transportation of Kazak oil via Russian pipelines, arguing that the export of Kazak oil via Russia cannot be regarded as transit because the oil that initially flows from Kazakhstan and that is exported at Russian ports (mixed with Russian oil) is not the same oil.<sup>233</sup> This problem was solved during Nazarbayev's official visit to Moscow in June 2000, when the Russian Ministry of Energy stated that the transportation of Kazak oil was in Russia's interests.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> "Nursultan Nazarbayev: My za mnogopolyusnyi mir,"

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> "Protocol Signed with Kazakhstan Supports Baku- Ceyhan Line," *Ankara Anatolia*, 19:51 GMT, 10 September 1999; in *FBIS-WEU-1999-0911*.

<sup>231</sup> Dmitriy Kozhukhin, "Kaspiyskoye more podelyat v etom godu," *Express-K*, 24 May 2000.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>233</sup> Viktor Shelgunov, "Nazarbayev idyet va-bank," *Tsentral'noaziatskiy byulleten'* (IAC Eurasia), 16 June 2000.

<sup>234</sup> "I eto vsye- pro neft'," *Vremya novostey* (IAC Eurasia), 21 June 2000.

## **2. Sino- Kazak relations: an alternative pole**

### **A. Trade and economic development**

Following the collapse of the Soviet regime, its economic ties, and regional cooperation, Kazakhstan started to develop other relations with regional and outside countries. The diversity of its relations would simultaneously underpin its sovereignty while also providing cheaper goods and exporting Kazakhstan's domestic production. Any possible alternative to the Russian economy would lessen Kazakhstan's dependency on Russia and would contribute to the republic's independence. Under these circumstances, China started to dominate the region and had certain advantages that strengthened its position. First, China with its enormous population, export-import potential, and rapidly growing industry, provides a lucrative market for Kazakhstan's gas-and-oil-dependent economy and is able to replace Russian imports with its cheaper basic consumer goods. Kazakhstan has a direct border with China so it might avoid Russia's political pressure and influence in exporting its own production, especially that of the oil sector. Secondly, China could certainly attract Kazakhstan with its "economic miracle of achieving rapid modernization without sacrificing political control."<sup>235</sup> While Western powers, and sometimes even Russia, deal with the political and legal sides of development (such as lessening of state control over the economy, granting equal opportunities, and developing means of political supervision), China never urges Kazakhstan to install democratic institutions or to protect the rights of ethnic Russians in the republic. Another reason for the burst of trade and economic relations between the two countries, as Shireen Hunter asserts, is the highly complementary natures of the two

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<sup>235</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 35.

economies, whereas the instability in Afghanistan and sanctions over Iran makes China the "shortest and cheapest outlet... to the outside world."<sup>236</sup>

According to Chinese Customs statistics, Sino-Kazak trade amounted to \$390 million in 1995 (increased by 17.7 % from 1994 trade), where the Kazak export amounted \$324.5 million (increased by 47.5 %) and import from China amounted to \$65.5 million (a decrease of 37.5 %); in 1996 the volume of trade between the two countries reached \$497.5 million.<sup>237</sup> Trade and economic relations between China and Kazakhstan are likely to grow considerably and have already made China its greatest trading partner after Russia. Not surprisingly, the balance of trade is prone to change in China's favour. Economic ties between the two countries are also bolstered by cooperation in scientific, cultural, and military fields, such as the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation signed on December 30, 1994, in Almaty<sup>238</sup> and an agreement on supplying the Chinese Navy with Kazak-made torpedoes.<sup>239</sup> But for Kazakhstan, especially in recent years, Sino-Kazak cooperation in the field of oil production and transportation via China has obtained a vital importance.

According to Viktor Gilinsky, world oil consumption will increase to 90 million barrels per day, in which Asian oil consumption will even surpass.<sup>240</sup> By the year 2005, Chinese demands for oil *imports* are expected to increase to 2 million barrels per day, or about 38 % of total consumption.<sup>241</sup> As culmination China's growing need for oil, an important contract was signed by the Kazak State Committee on Investments, the *Aktyubmunaygaz* Company of Kazakhstan, and the Chinese National Petroleum

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<sup>236</sup> Hunter, pp. 128-129.

<sup>237</sup> Tokayev, pp. 225-226.

<sup>238</sup> "PRC-Kazakhstan Sign Agreement on Technological Ties," *Xinhua*, 20:47 GMT, 30 December 1994; in *FBIS-CHI-95-002*.

<sup>239</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan to Supply Torpedoes to Chinese Navy," *ITAR-TASS*, 10:21 GMT, 19 June 1998; in *FBIS-SOV-98-170*.

<sup>240</sup> Viktor Gilinsky, "Energy in the Former Soviet Republics," in David Carlton and Paul Ingram (eds.), *The Search for Stability in Russia and the Former Soviet Bloc*, Aldershot, 1997, p. 62.

Company (CNPC) on September 26, 1997. According to the contract, which will be valid for 20 years, CNPC will provide \$4 billion in investments and during this period the Kazak budget will receive \$3.16 billion by means of income and local taxes, bonus and excise duties.<sup>242</sup> Another agreement signed in Almaty September 1997 stipulates the construction of a pipeline from Western Kazakhstan to Western China, which would become an alternative to the Caspian Pipeline Consortium established in 1992 to transport the Tengiz oil from Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.<sup>243</sup> By now, the transportation of Kazak oil to China is provided mainly by railway. In 1998, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was to buy as much as one million tonnes of oil from Kazakhstan via railway, and according to experts, might become Kazakhstan's major oil consumer.<sup>244</sup> Then-acting Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Ahmedjan Esimov stated that a package of Kazak-Chinese agreements on Caspian oil and its transportation was estimated at \$9.5 billion.<sup>245</sup> The possible transportation of Kazak oil via China to Japan and other Southeast Asian countries is also being considered among Kazakhstan's prospective deals.

Kazakhstan, hampered by its disadvantageous position of being land-locked country, and highly dependence on Russian transportation routes, considers the Chinese alternative as one of the most important and profitable solutions. Kazakhstan has direct rail, air, and highway links with China and strives to develop their diversity and capacity. During a summer 1991 visit to China, president Nazarbayev offered to extend the current Almaty-Urumchi and Beijing air routes and use it as a transit base from

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<sup>241</sup> *Oil and Gas Journal*, 28 August 1995; cited by John Calabrese, "Çin'in Orta Asya'daki politikası: Yenileme ve Üslenme," *Avrasya Etüdləri* (Almaty), No. 16 (Autumn-Winter 1999), p. 88.

<sup>242</sup> "Kazakhstan: Almaty, Beijing Sign Kazakhstan Oil Exploration Accord," *Interfax*, 09:24 GMT, 26 September 1997; in *FBIS-SOV-97-269*.

<sup>243</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan-China Agreement Include Pipeline Project," *Interfax*, 15:59 GMT, 25 September 1997; in *FBIS-SOV-97-268*.

<sup>244</sup> "Kazakhstan: China to Buy 1 Million Tonnes of Kazakh Oil This Year," *ITAR-TASS*, 10:50 GMT, 17 April 1998; in *FBIS-SOV-98-108*.

<sup>245</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan-China Agreement"

Kazakstan to Japan and South Korea. Also he offered to increase the volume of transportation of the railroad line between China and Russia via Kazakstan.<sup>246</sup> Another agreement signed during the September 1995 visit of Nazarbayev to China dealt with Kazakstan's trade exchanges with Pacific and Southeast Asian countries to be conducted via the Chinese port of *Lianyungang* saving some 5,000 km in transport, while the distance from Kazakstan to this port is 3,500 km, while that to the nearest Russian Far Eastern port is 8,500km.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Hafeez Malik, "New Relationship Between Central and Southeastern Asia and Pakistan's Regional Politics," in Malik (ed.), *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p. 269.

<sup>247</sup> "PRC: 'Roundup' Views Sino-Kazakhstan Relations," *Xinhua*, 02:58 GMT, 3 June 1996; in *FBIS-CHI-96-130*.

## **B. Eastern Turkestan and Kazakstan's policy**

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Province (XUAP), or Eastern Turkestan, has a great strategic, economic, and political importance for Sino-Kazak relations. Recognition of Chinese supremacy over the region and 'non-intervention' in domestic affairs has been a long-standing condition for Kazakstan's relations with China. Kazakstan has certain historical linkages with Eastern Turkestan, which was formally incorporated into the Chinese Empire in 1884. In 1933, and again in 1944, an independent Eastern Turkestan Republic composed of Kazaks and Uygurs was established.<sup>248</sup> According to the Chinese statistics, some 1,111,718 ethnic Kazaks live in Eastern Turkestan<sup>249</sup> (Kazaks claim that there are at least 1,500,000) and a considerable number of ethnic Uygurs (the largest ethnic group in Eastern Turkestan many of whom fled to Kazakstan in 1930s through early 1960s)<sup>250</sup> live in Kazakstan. The Muslim population of China, which is severely suppressed by the Chinese government, suffered from a policy of assimilation and planned immigration of the Chinese into the region. As a result, the Muslim population has become resistant to the regime making the People's Republic of China (PRC) government anxious, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union and growth of ethnic and religious awareness throughout Central Asia. According to controversial official Chinese figures, among with the Province's total population of 15.2 million, the Uygurs represent the largest ethnic community with 7.19 million (47.5 %), Kazaks comprise 7.3 %, ethnic Chinese Muslims comprise 782,000 (4.5 %) and some other ethnic groups such as Kirghiz and Mongols number 140,000

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<sup>248</sup> Peter Ferdinand, "The New Central Asia and China," in Peter Ferdinand (ed.), *The New Central Asia and Its Neighbours*, London, 1994, p. 96.

<sup>249</sup> "State Statistical Bureau, *Beijing Review* 52 (1990), p. 30; cited by Malik, "New Relationship," p. 255.

<sup>250</sup> Robert M. Cutler, "Kazakhstan's Ethnic Mix: Recipe for a Shatterbelt in Central Eurasia," *Turkistan Newsletter* (An on line newsletter and Discussion List on Turkic Peoples), 13 December 1999.



(0.8 %) each.<sup>251</sup> While 60.1 % of the region's entire population consist of Muslims, the number of Chinese has risen to 5.7 million (37.6 %).<sup>252</sup> The ethnic Kazak minority in Eastern Turkestan represents the largest Kazak community of some 4.5 million Kazaks living outside Kazakhstan. In contrast to the People's Republic of China's other regions, Eastern Turkestan is still largely controlled by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), not the Armed Police, and the province still suffers from the nuclear weapons testing center at Lob Nor, which also places a great number of military staff in the region.<sup>253</sup>

With the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic China the Kazak government recognized that,

[T]he government of the People's Republic of China is the only legitimate government of China and that Taiwan is the indivisible part of the Chinese territory. The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan guarantees, that it would not establish any kind of official relations with Taiwan.<sup>254</sup>

Although, there is no such a direct official statement on the non-involvement of Kazakhstan in Eastern Turkestan, the Kazak government guarantees this under the guise of the struggle against separatism, terrorism, and ethnic strife. In order to satisfy its greatest southern neighbour introducing security guarantees to the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kazak government not only refrains from displaying concern for its fellow Kazaks or other kin communities in Eastern Turkestan and their problems, but also commits itself "to prevent advocates of an 'East[ern] Turkestan Republic' from working against China and interfering in Xinjiang from the territory of Kazakhstan."<sup>255</sup> In July 1996, the two countries signed a "treaty on mutual extradition of criminals and criminal suspects."<sup>256</sup> Following several occasions of extradition of ethnic Uygurs who had fled to Kazakhstan, the republic was regarded as having "collaborated with Chinese

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<sup>251</sup> Thomas Hoppe, "Die chinesische Position in Ost-Turkestan/ Xinjiang," *China aktuell* (June 1992), p. 360; cited by Ferdinand, "The New Central Asia," p. 98.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> Ferdinand, "The New Central Asia," p. 98.

<sup>254</sup> Tokayev, p. 193.

<sup>255</sup> *China Aktuell* (April 1994), p. 392; cited by Ferdinand, "The New Central Asia," p. 100.

authorities and violated international treaties by peremptorily returning to China those ethnic Uighurs from China who have fled to Kazakhstan and claimed political refugee status by reason of racial persecution."<sup>257</sup>

In addition to the province's strategic and demographic importance, Eastern Turkestan plays a key economic role either for China, Kazakhstan, and the entire Central Asian region. The Treaty of Principles and Main Trends of the Promotion of Cooperation between the province and the then-Kazak SSR was signed during President Nazarbayev's visit to XUAP.<sup>258</sup> In 1991, the total volume of trade between the Central Asian republics and the Province amounted to \$1 billion and in 1992 it reached \$2 billion.<sup>259</sup> Following this, the Chinese government granted five cities in the province the same rights as the ten 'open cities' on the East coast.<sup>260</sup> The growing relations with Kazakhstan also spurred the economic development of Eastern Turkestan, in which more than 70 % of the region's external economic exchanges were conducted with Central Asian countries,<sup>261</sup> attracting investments to the region and improving its welfare.

### **C. The Shanghai Forum**

The Shanghai Agreement on Confidence-building in the Military Field in Border Areas, which created the 'Shanghai Five', was signed on April 26, 1996, between the People's Republic China and four former Soviet neighbouring states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. The agreement stipulates the mutual dislocation of military troops and armament, except border troops, from the border zone of 100 km; the parties agreed to refrain from providing military manoeuvres targeting another side

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<sup>256</sup> "Kazakhstan: Nazarbayev, Jiang Zemin Sign Joint Declaration," *Interfax*, 07:36 GMT, 5 July 1996; in *FBIS-SOV-96-130*.

<sup>257</sup> Cutler.

<sup>258</sup> Tokayev, p. 192.

<sup>259</sup> Ferdinand, "The New Central Asia," p. 102.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>261</sup> "Xinjiang Increasing Ties with Central Asian Republics," *Xinhua*, 03:36 GMT, 3 March 1995; in *FBIS-CHI-95-042*.

and limit of the scale of manoeuvres and the number of staff attending them.<sup>262</sup> Also, signatories to the treaty would be able to observe military exercises in order to prevent any dangerous military activities.<sup>263</sup>

The Republic of Kazakhstan actively participated in the Shanghai Five meetings, providing it with some advantages. First, it was a forum where the republic could contact and observe its two great neighbours. Second, the implementation of the agreement could free it from the heavy burden of armament and avoid unfavourable tension. Lastly, the Shanghai Five was more than just a military or border agreement by providing certain economic cooperation opportunities. Initially, Russia sponsored talks with China and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan on their common border issue and the limitation of troops and weapons. In April 1995, such negotiations were held in Moscow between the working groups of the countries.<sup>264</sup>

At the summit meeting of the Shanghai Five leaders held in Bishkek, on August 25, 1999, the participants concluded a declaration in which the members expressed their resoluteness "not to permit the use of the territories of their countries for the organization of activities violating the sovereignty, security, and public order of any of the five states."<sup>265</sup> Besides lending support for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia, the participants unofficially condemned separatism and 'Islamic fundamentalism'.<sup>266</sup>

The recent meeting of the Shanghai Five held in July 2000 in Dushanbe, was distinguished from the previous meetings in several ways.. The Dushanbe summit was the first meeting of the Shanghai Five series attended by the new Russian President

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<sup>262</sup> Bakayev and Urpekov, p. 41.

<sup>263</sup> "PRC: 5-Nation Military Agreement Signed in Shanghai," *Xinhua*, 09:41 GMT, 26 April 1996; in *FBIS-CHI-96-082*..

<sup>264</sup> "China, 4 CIS Member States Hold Border Talks," *Xinhua*, 16:07 GMT, 10 April 1995; in *FBIS-CHI-95-070*.

<sup>265</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 33, 27 August 1999.

Vladimir Putin whose neo-imperialist policies forced him to keep close to his eastern neighbours. In February 2000, Putin, then acting president and Prime Minister, appointed Vladimir Vorobyev as the special envoy to the Shanghai Five.<sup>267</sup> The Shanghai Five summit had great importance for the new Russian leader and probably was the only forum where he could get official support for his 'anti-separatist' and 'anti-terrorist' operations in Chechnia. Interestingly, Kazakstan was the only country that did not face any threat of 'Islamic extremism' whatsoever. Its greatest threat is Russian separatism in the north and the border dispute with China. The Dushanbe summit was attended by the Uzbek President Islam Karimov, who did not attend the previous meetings. The leader of Uzbekistan, whose country does not have common borders with Russia and China, is deeply concerned with the struggle against his opposition which, has been alleged to cooperate with Islamic militants.

Before the summit started, the foreign ministers of the member states signed a *communiqué* on the joint struggle against terrorism, even committing large-scale antiterrorist operations. Additionally, the sides decided to cooperate in the economic and cultural spheres.<sup>268</sup> The leaders of participating states again expressed their opposition to interference in the interior affairs of other states even "under the excuse of humanitarian intervention and protection of human rights."<sup>269</sup> Besides Uzbekistan, some other regional states, namely Mongolia, India, and Iran, expressed their interest in cooperation with the Shanghai Five (henceforth called *Shanghai Forum*).<sup>270</sup>

#### **D. The border issue and Chinese expansionism**

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> "Putin Appoints Special Envoy to 'Shanghai Five'," *ITAR-TASS*; in *FBIS-CHI-2000-0217*.

<sup>268</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 27, 09 June.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

The 1,700 km<sup>271</sup> long Sino-Kazak border, a legacy of the Soviet and Russian imperial regime was settled by the St. Petersburg Treaty of 1881 and further provisions of 1883, 1904, and 1915.<sup>272</sup> This border is one of the most vulnerable chains of Kazak national security, where it perceives threat. Throughout history, China expressed its imperial mood to expand to the Central Asia through incorporation of lands and assimilation of native population. In the past, and especially during Mao's rule, China laid certain claims on Kazak border territories and intended to change the border, namely in 1968 and 1971 and in 1992, after Kazakhstan became an independent state, the Chinese ambassador to Kazakhstan argued that the Kazak-Chinese border needed correction.<sup>273</sup> It is said that the Chinese term *Xi Yu*, meaning 'Northwest province' in Chinese is an "historical designation for an area encompassing much of Central Asia."<sup>274</sup> The Chinese territorial claims are underpinned by the great involvement of China in Kazak economy, immigration, and the settlement of Chinese in Kazakhstan. While in the 1989 census no Chinese were counted, it is estimated that some 300,000-350,000 Chinese live in the republic today.<sup>275</sup> Also, it is well-known that the Chinese armed forces located in the region are superior in armament and number to the armed forces of Russia and the CIS countries located in Central Asia.<sup>276</sup> Also the Chinese nuclear testing center situated at Lob Nor, is only 900 km from the Kazak border and only 1,200 km from Almaty. From 1964 to 1992, 38 nuclear bombs were tested there and those before 1980 were exploded in the air, causing harmful radiation for the whole region.<sup>277</sup> This actual Chinese threat prevents Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states from distancing itself too far from the Russian Army as the only power to rely in case of

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<sup>271</sup> Shaumian, p. 70.

<sup>272</sup> Laumulin, p. 77.

<sup>273</sup> *Express*, November 20, 2000; and Aziya no 1993; both cited by Laumulin, p. 77.

<sup>274</sup> Steven Shabad, "Chinese Inroads: Central Asia," *World Press Review*, vol. 46, Issue 9 (September 1999), p. 24.

<sup>275</sup> Ferdinand, p. 103.

Chinese invasion, despite the Chinese promise given to Kazakhstan, that "it would never use nuclear weapons against it" on February 8, 1995.<sup>278</sup>

One of the most sensitive issues in Sino-Soviet relations, the border issue between China and Kazakhstan, was fixed by signing an 'historic' border accord on April 26, 1994 -exactly two years before of the signing of the Shanghai Agreement- during the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng to Kazakhstan.<sup>279</sup> Negotiations on defining today's Sino-Kazak border began in the 1970s and "were near completion when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991," leaving a stretch of 73 km undefined.<sup>280</sup> Following the agreement, the joint Kazak-Chinese commission on the border demarcation was established. And in 1996 and July 1998, the two sides signed two complementary agreements on border issues, both during the visits of the Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Kazakhstan.<sup>281</sup> During the negotiations, the Chinese side pressed its claims over a 364-square-mile area of disputed territories and launched a project of diverting up to 40 % of border rivers to China, and under this pressure Kazakhstan agreed to cede 157 square-miles to China.<sup>282</sup>

The Kazak Government tried to derive benefit from the Shanghai Five meetings at any possible stage, i.e. *tête-à-tête* meetings of Kazak and Chinese presidents. During the Bishkek Round of the Shanghai Five, the two presidents "completely solved all border problems between the two countries."<sup>283</sup> During the latest summit of the Shanghai Forum, President Nazarbayev also stated that the border problems were actually

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<sup>276</sup> Laumulin, p. 79.

<sup>277</sup> Shamiah, p. 70 and Laumulin p.80.

<sup>278</sup> "China Gives Security Assurance to " *B-Wire*, *B-WIRE/FF00480*, 13: 04:44.

<sup>279</sup> "China, Kazakhstan Sign 'Historic' Border Accord," *B-WIRE/ FF0103*, 14:56:59.

<sup>280</sup> Nadira Artykova, "Kazakhstan and Chinese Settle Border Dispute," *B-WIRE/ FF06533*, 12:11.23, 26 April 1994.

<sup>281</sup> "China: China , Kazakhstan Sign Border Agreement," *Xinhua*, 07:17 GMT, 04 July 1998; in FBIS-CHI-98-185.

<sup>282</sup> Shabad.

<sup>283</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 33, 27 August 1999.

solved.<sup>284</sup> In June 2000, other negotiations on the issue of border rivers were held in China, after which the Chinese side decided "'to take Kazakhstani interests into account' when outlining all the projects on construction of any objects on and/or along the rivers crossing the borders of the two countries."<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 09 June 2000.

<sup>285</sup> *Kazakh News*, June 27 2000.

### CHAPTER III: KAZAKSTAN AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

#### 1. Kazak-Turkish relations: a gate to the West

Kazak-Turkish relations at the governmental level are full of inconsistencies, although they provide important indicators for both countries' foreign policy preferences. While during its first years of independence, Kazakhstan adhered its 'integrationist' aspirations for the former Soviet state, the Turkish Republic was fully involved in its attempts to become a full member of the European Union and any other institution over the Western European space. While Kazakhstan was trying to preserve the gentle balance of its relations between Russia, China, Western and Islamic worlds and build its first bricks of independent statehood, Turkey dealt with its 'Kurdish' problem domestically and with the Cyprus and Aegean Sea problems in the international arena, facing protests and vetos of Greece, a full member of the NATO and the EU. The rise of Islamic Welfare Party (RP) and general political instability of governments and their sudden policy changes obstructed the conduct of a stable policy towards Kazakhstan or Central Asia in general.

Since its formation in 1923 under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish Republic made the principles of 'Westernism' and 'Laicism' the main pillars of its international orientation, aiming also to integrate its economy and political system into that of Western Europe. Today, 53 % of Turkish exports and 44 % of its import occur with the EU countries.<sup>286</sup> Even the USA share in Turkish export and imports is considerably lower: 6 % and 11 % respectively.<sup>287</sup> On the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey suffered from the disruption of formally vivid economic relations with the Arab countries, which became an important source of hard currency during the Oil Crisis. Especially after the Gulf War and the establishment of an economic embargo

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<sup>286</sup> Alejandro V. Lorca, "Türkiye: Orta Asya'ya Açılan Kapı," *Avrasya Etüdleri* (Ankara), Vol.2, No. 3 (Autumn 1995), p. 63.



on Iraq, Turkish economic relations with the Arab world sizeably declined. In addition, the establishment of close Turkish-Israeli relations in military and intelligence fields seriously 'offended' Arab countries – reflected in economic transactions. Following the collapse of the bipolar global system, Turkey started to lose its former privileged status of a 'fort against the Communist expansion' and the West began to dwell on the human and minority rights violations in Turkey. In the post-Soviet world Armenian lobbies in major Western countries strengthened its activities against Turkey, while the latter's serious attempts to be integrated into the EU faced Greek vetos. Under these changing circumstances, Turkey launched an increased involvement in the Central Asian Turkic states in order to increase Turkey's bargaining potential by providing some political, economic, and military advantages.

On March 15, 1991, the last year of the Soviet Union, an agreement on cooperation was signed between the Turkish Republic and the then-Kazak SSR and on December 16, 1991, Turkey was the first state to recognize the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan.<sup>288</sup> Despite close ethnic, linguistic and historical kinship, the two countries had been sharply disrupted by rival ideologies. Practically, they had no direct relations until the last few months of the Soviet statehood. Interestingly, all political movements in Turkey tried to gain political credits from the emerging relations with the Central Asian newly independent states. The relations with the Central Asian 'brothers' became a matter of major importance, and almost every Turkish Prime Minister visited Central Asia. Graham E. Fuller had noted that there was no actual difference between Islamic and nationalistic newspapers in their support for the Central Asian Turkic peoples.<sup>289</sup> The Central Asian republics, and Kazakhstan in particular, became a lucrative market for

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<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> Tokayev, p.509.

<sup>289</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's New Eastern Orientation," in Graham Fuller and Ian O. Lesser (eds.), *Turkey's New Geopolitics: From the Balkans to Western China*, Boulder, 1993, pp. 68-69.

the Turkish medium-scale manufacturing sector and the construction industry, which had been in stagnation after the stopping of gigantic building fields in the oil-rich Arab countries.

On April 9-11, 1993, Turkish President Turgut Özal paid his first official visit to Kazakstan. During his visit, a number of trade and economic agreements were reached and the first International Kazak-Turkish University named after Ahmed Yesevi was inaugurated in Southern Kazakstan. Also, the two presidents declared that the settlement of peace in Bosnia, Mountainous Karabağ, and in the Middle East was possible only through peace negotiations based on the UN and OECD peacekeeping efforts.<sup>290</sup>

During the first years of Kazakstan's independence, the nature of its relations with Turkey was a dilemma for the young state. On the one hand, Turkey, a congenial nation and state, a member of the NATO and the Council of Europe, was close to the West politically and economically, and might provide moral and material support for the devastated economy of Kazakstan. In the international arena, Turkey was to become a guaranteed ally, and more importantly, an influential lobby. Turkey was among the countries that realized the actual power of the republics' leaders. Contrary to Western countries, Turkey never criticized the unlimited power of Central Asian leaders and refrained from supporting, at least at official level, the opposition groups to the ruling power, a position which made Turkey a partner comfortable for elites. After the dissolution of the Kazak parliament by President Nazarbayev in March 1995, Turkish President Süleyman Demirel found his actions as "a convincing confirmation of the *triumph of true democracy* and the rule of law and evidence of Nursultan Nazarbayev's adherence to the observance of constitutional principles"(emphasis added).<sup>291</sup> Besides Nazarbayev's cordial relations with the former Turkish president and other Turkish

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<sup>290</sup> Tokayev, p. 510.

politicians, the Kazak president often visits Turkey, both officially and unofficially, often spending his holidays in Turkey. As one Russian newspaper has argued, he builds a summer residence in the famous Turkish resort town of Kemer.<sup>292</sup>

On the other hand, any serious involvement in Turkish affairs, not to mention so-called Pan-Turkist aspirations, could affect the new republic's sensitive relations with Russia and China.<sup>293</sup> The advancement of its Turkic identity at official level could cause the displeasure of the republic's Russian and Slavic population, who have already been discontented about the promotion of the 'Kazakness' of the state. Despite the huge volume of trade, amounting to \$5 billion<sup>294</sup> and construction of long-term contracts between Turkey and Russia, the policies of these two countries compete in the region. Russia, which tries to re-gain its former superiority and influence over Central Asia and the Caucasus, accuses Turkey of acting on America's behalf "to buy the Muslims of Central Asia."<sup>295</sup> Accordingly, Russia launched an anti-Turkish media propaganda, which, while not being harsh, has influenced public opinion, especially that of the Central Asian states. Commenting on the complexity of circumstances encompassing Kazakhstan's foreign policy orientation, the Kazak Foreign Minister of Tokayev has stated that,

Turkey mostly negatively reacts against the expansion of Moscow's economic pressure in the Caspian Sea, especially in cases related to the transportation of oil. Russia, on the other hand, hardly avoids it fears about the phantom of Pan-Turkism and its habit to regard the developments of relations between Kazakhstan and Muslim states as an approval of the thesis about Islamic solidarity. And the United States is prone to estimate any contacts with Iran as actions of anti-American inclination.<sup>296</sup>

## A. Turkic Summits

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<sup>291</sup> "Demirel Backs Nazarbayev Dismissal of Parliament," *Interfax*, 16:32 GMT, 24 March 1995; in *FBIS-SOV-95-058*.

<sup>292</sup> "Sekrety Sem'i Nazarbayeva..."

<sup>293</sup> Hunter, p. 138.

<sup>294</sup> Tokayev, p. 505.

<sup>295</sup> "Iran: Mosque as Carapace," *The Economist*, 21 September 1991, pp. 58-59; cited by Twining, p.141.

<sup>296</sup> Tokayev, p. 500.

In regard to the regional states, Turkey enjoys its peculiar feature of being a congenial state for the Central Asian Turkic states: Kazakstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. Tajikistan while being a Persian-speaking state, belongs to the *Sunnite* sect of Islam that makes it different from *Shiite* Iran, although the linguistic link should not be underestimated. Besides being the first country to recognize the Central Asian republics' independence and establish the embassies there, as well as the first country to host the republics' presidents, Turkey has launched an active policy towards cooperation between the Turkic-speaking countries, including Turkey, the four Central Asian states, and Azerbaijan. The most prominent realization of this cooperation was the 'Turkic summits' which were held on a systematic basis. The importance of these summits is likely to be unseen, but, in fact, they had a vital role for participants, especially for the Newly Independent States. First, the summits were among the very few forums where the Central Asian states could meet without Russian supervision. Second, it was a place where the Central Asian states could consider their own problems and disputes, for the most times under the balanced intermediation of Turkey. Third, it was a platform in which the participants, except Kirghizstan, were parties with direct interest in Caspian oil, gas production, and transportation. Thus, there they could negotiate and determine their claims and interests before other international negotiations directly concerned with the case became involved. Finally, in addition to all its cultural and economic issues, the sides could harmonize their foreign policy trends and attempts toward certain issues.

In January 1992, the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TICA) was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop a "legal framework for liberalization... democratization... and management cadres... necessary to help the new republics adjust the outside world not only politically and economically but also

socially and culturally.”<sup>297</sup> In 1995, a special Minister of State for the relations with the Turkic states was established within the Turkish government and obtained a permanent status in the Cabinet.<sup>298</sup>

The first summit meeting of the ‘Turkic summits’ series was held in Ankara on October 30-31, 1992, and was concluded by the signing of the Ankara Declaration on October 31.<sup>299</sup> A number of agreements were signed, such as setting up telecommunication links, elimination of the travel restrictions,<sup>300</sup> and calls for “a social order, set up on a basis of democratic principles, respect of the human rights, secularism, social justice, and market economy.”<sup>301</sup> But the Kazak President expressed his caution about the establishment of a linguistic/ethnic community, arguing that it “does not bring people together but divides them.”<sup>302</sup> As it is often argued, the Central Asian states which suffered from ‘the younger brother’ complex for a long time, simply did want Turkish overlordship.<sup>303</sup>

The second Turkic summit meeting held in Istanbul on October 18-19, 1994, was concluded with the signing of the Istanbul Declaration. Interestingly, among the issues considered at the summit (such as setting of Armenian-Azerbaijani and Tajik-Afghan problems) the participants expressed their views about Bosnia and Cyprus.<sup>304</sup> As the Kazak Foreign Minister Tokayev asserted, Turkey admitted the fact that Kazakhstan would not jeopardize its interests in Russian and other regional interests while also

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<sup>297</sup> Umut Arık, “The New Independent States and Turkish Foreign Policy,” in Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), *Turkish Foreign Policy: Recent Developments*, Madison, WI, 1996, p.38; cited by Kemal H. Karpat, “The Role of Turkey and Iran in Incorporating the Former Soviet Republics into the World System,” in Karen Dewisha (ed.), *The International Dimension*, p.185.

<sup>298</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, “Turkish Policy in Central Asia,” in Touraj Atabaki and John O’Kane (eds.), p.99.

<sup>299</sup> Suat Bilge, “Commonwealth of Independent States and Turkey,” *Eurasian Studies* (Ankara), Vol.4 (Winter 1995), p.90

<sup>300</sup> Shaumian, p. 70.

<sup>301</sup> Tokayev, p. 508.

<sup>302</sup> Shaumian, p. 70.

<sup>303</sup> Hunter, p. 139.

<sup>304</sup> Tokayev, p. 508.

pointing out that Turkey would continue to pay more attention to its relations with the USA and Europe.<sup>305</sup>

After the Istanbul summit, the meetings of the Turkic Summits held in Bishkek (1995), Tashkent (1996), and Astana (1998) started to lose their primal importance, while bilateral relations became more important. Especially after the cooling of Uzbek-Turkish relations, the homogeneity of Turkish relations with the Central Asian republics was damaged. The President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurad Niyazov, did not participate in the Fifth Turkic Summit in Astana which was instead attended by the Chairman of the Turkmen Parliament Sahad Muradov, while both President Karimov of Uzbekistan and Niyazov did not participate in the last of the summits which was held in Baku in April 2000.

## **B. Turkey and the Caspian Oil.**

Despite the fact that “the main foreign policy objective of the current Turkish government (like that of its predecessors) is to secure Turkey’s admission to the EU”<sup>306</sup> and that the “economic collapse and political disorder in the new Central Asian states pose no direct threat to Turkey, whereas it is possible to imagine any number of scenarios in which developments in Russia would have a direct impact on policymakers in Ankara,”<sup>307</sup> Turkey became actively involved in Central Asia and was for the most part confronted by Russian discontent. One of the most important reasons that has spurred Turkish involvement in the region is the energy resources of the Caspian Sea - oil and gas- that could strengthen the Turkish position in Europe and the whole world both in economic and political terms.

Turkey, with its growing population and economy and lack of hydrocarbon energy resources, is itself severely dependent on external energy support. In fact, the Caspian

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<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 511-512.

<sup>306</sup> Winrow, p. 91.

Sea resources seem optimal for Turkey's economic, foreign and security policy because supplies from Iran, Russia or the Arab countries affect its relations with Europe and the USA. Also, construction of a pipeline through Turkey to Europe would become the sole stable route for oil and gas transportation for the land-locked Central Asian countries making Turkey the major energy outlet to Europe as well as reaping with economic gains through transportation and service fees.

Kazakstan has oil reserves that are estimated to be 2-4 billion tonnes (15-30 billion barrels) and its production is projected to be 0.8 million barrels per day in 2000 and double that range in 2010.<sup>308</sup> Kazak gas reserves are estimated to be of nearly 2 trillion cubic meters, which is equal to three times the annual consumption of the USA.<sup>309</sup>

Kazakstan, together with Azerbaijan, regards the Caspian as a *closed sea*, which stipulates the establishment of the sovereign rights of each of the littoral states to its own 'economic zone' (mineral wealth, shelf, territorial waters, etc.) in accordance with the UN Convention on Maritime Law. While the other Caspian bordering states – Russia, Iran, and Turkmenistan- argue that the Caspian Sea is *a lake*, a closed body of water, relying on 1921 and 1940 treaties. The status of a lake stipulates the common possession of the Caspian, which, beyond doubt, will serve the interests of Russia, the greatest power in the region both economically and technologically.<sup>310</sup> Turkey, though mostly concerned about the transportation of the Caspian oil, tacitly supports the position of Kazakstan and Azerbaijan over the status of the Caspian Sea. Interestingly, Kazakstan developed cordial political and economic relations with Azerbaijan.

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<sup>307</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 26

<sup>308</sup> Matthew J. Sagers, "The Energy Industries of the Former USSR: A Mid-Year Survey," *Post-Soviet Geography* (June 1993), p. 356, 366; cited by Viktor Gilinsky, "Energy in the Former Soviet Republics," in David Carlton and Paul Ingram (eds.), *The Search for Stability in Russia and the Former Soviet Bloc*, Aldershot, 1997, p.66.

<sup>309</sup> David Hoffman, "Russia's Economic Colossus," *Washington Post*, 3 December 1995; cited by Gilinsky, p. 75.

Meanwhile, the two countries seem to be the most 'ardent' supporters of Turkish interests in the region. The Kazak government informed the CIS countries, including the members of the Customs Union –Belarus, Russia, Kirghizstan, and Tajikistan- that from July 1, 2000 onwards it would introduce restrictive remedies towards the import of petroleum and chemistry related goods, including customs tax of 10-30 %.<sup>311</sup> This could be interpreted as Kazakhstan's *de facto* withdrawal from the Customs Union. Most surprisingly, Kazakhstan did not inform Azerbaijan about the introduction of such provisions towards it.<sup>312</sup>

Despite being called the 'fiasco' of Turkish policy in the region or the 'betrayal' of the Central Asian countries by Turkish media (especially after the signing of Russo-Turkmen and Russo-Kazak agreements on oil and gas transportation via Russian pipelines -the sole existing transportation means) Turkey still plays an important role in the Caspian oil issue. Turkey enjoys the support of the West and its means of essential pressure over oil transportation via its control of the straits on ecological grounds is formidable. Thus it is likely to play a more active role in the future. Turkey's aspirations for integration into the EU and the recently signed agreement with the EU on energy supplies could bolster its position in the Caspian Sea in the future.

### **C. Kazak-Turkish relations on the eve of the 21st century**

In the second half of the 1990s, Turkish-Central Asian relations were stabilized. The expectations and initial euphoria of both sides were not attained. Turkey could not obtain the dominant position among the regional states to replace Russian influence. Central Asian states finally realized that having Turkey as a close ally was not enough

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<sup>310</sup> Mekhman Qafarly, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 6 Dec 1995, p.3; *FBIS-SOV-International Affairs*, 21 Dec 1995; cited by Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "The Transformation of Russian Foreign Policy," p.48; and Rubinstein, p.48.

<sup>311</sup> "Azerbaijan: Kazakhstan vyhodit iz Tamozhennogo soyuza SNG?" *Panorama* (Almaty), no.27, July 2000.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*



to get external support, either financial or political, and that Russia was still an important chain for their development, at least for a while. Although often underestimated, Turkey played a great role in the reinforcement of the states' independence and the development of their economies with its financial, technical, and educational support. Interestingly, private entrepreneurs and their personal efforts facilitated Turkish involvement in Kazak economy notwithstanding opposite developments at the governmental level. Also, many Turkish specialists and companies are engaged in fulfilment of many projects initiated and financed by Western companies, especially in the field of construction, making the real range of Turkish involvement seem less than it really is.

Kazak-Turkish bilateral trade reached \$112 million in 1993 (increased by 300 % over 1992).<sup>313</sup> For the first ten months of 1996, trade amounted to \$152.7 million, where Kazak export amounted to \$41.6 million and imports- \$111.1 million.<sup>314</sup> In addition to governmental credits of \$200 million provided by the Turkish government in 1992, some 319 Turkish companies launched production in Kazakstan among 2200 foreign companies and some 200 Turkish companies were planning or started to realize 42 projects with a total value of \$2 billion.<sup>315</sup> As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State of the Turkish Republic Devlet Bahçeli had noted in 1998, exports to Kazakstan from Turkey had increased to \$212 million while imports from Kazakstan reached \$253 million and also argued that the volume of trade could reach \$1 billion in coming years.<sup>316</sup>

Besides the Turkish contribution to the republic's economic and political development, Turkey created a new 'society' that is akin to Turkish culture and language

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<sup>313</sup> Kemal H. Karpat , "The Role of Turkey and Iran," p. 185.

<sup>314</sup> Tokayev, p. 514.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 514-515.

through a number of student exchange programs and the establishment of educational institutions at the elementary, secondary, and higher educational levels. Along with more than 100 Turkish schools with some 2,000 teaching staff and 20,000 students<sup>317</sup> established all over the 'Turkic world', Turkey provided some 15,584 scholarships<sup>318</sup> for Turks outside of Turkey.

Turkish-Central Asian relations in general, and Kazak-Turkish relations in particular, also provided certain advantages to the Turkish political and geostrategic position along with the economic gains. First, the Turkish republic seems to have obtained a new bloc of allies among regional countries that will facilitate Turkey's key role in the region. It might be that the new states enlarged Turkish vision and bargaining power, especially in its relations with Europe. Second, Turkey enjoyed support and understanding from these countries, at least to some extent, for its Kurdish and Cyprus problems and naturally gained an additional number of advocates at international forums. Kazakhstan was among the countries to support Turkish government's efforts "to preserve the stability and territorial integrity of the country,"<sup>319</sup> while the Kazak Foreign Ministry audibly named the PKK (so-called Kurdistan Working Party) a "terrorist organization."<sup>320</sup>

For Kazakhstan, as for any other Central Asian newly independent states, Turkey is a gate to the outside world, both economically and politically, and Turkish support really contributed its independent state-building. Turkey, a state with an "Eurasian version of

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<sup>316</sup> "Bahçeli: Trade Volume With Kazakhstan Can Reach \$1b," *Ankara Anatolia*, 17:20 GMT, 9 September 1999; in *FBIS-WEU-1999-0909*.

<sup>317</sup> Öner Kabasakal, "Türk Dünyası'na Yönelik En Stratejik Yatırım: Eğitim," *Yeni Türkiye*, No. 15 (May-June 1997), p. 707; cited by Ahmet T. Kuru, "Türkiye'nin Orta Asya'ya Yönelişi: Dokuz Asır Sonra Politika Değişimi," in Mim Kemal Öke, *Geçiş Sürecinde Orta Asya Türk Cumhuriyetleri*, İstanbul, 1999, p. 144.

<sup>318</sup> *Zaman*, İstanbul, 9 April 1998; cited by Kuru, p. 144.

<sup>319</sup> "Demirel Backs Nazarbayev Dismissal of Parliament"

<sup>320</sup> *Zaman-Kazakistan*, in [www.zaman.com.tr/dzaman/kazakistan](http://www.zaman.com.tr/dzaman/kazakistan)

Western democracy and market economy,”<sup>321</sup> was regarded as an optimal vector of development for the newly independent Muslim Turkic states. Moreover, the secularism of the Turkish state system made it a preferable option for other Muslim states. According to Alejandro V. Lorca, Turkey would play the same role as Spain played for Latin American countries in relations with the EU, which is described by so-called ‘bridge theory’, according to which certain linkages with Spain, such as historical and linguistic ones, facilitate economic relations of Latin American states with the EU countries along with Spain's special role of a ‘natural lobby’ in favour of Latin American states.<sup>322</sup>

Süleyman Demirel, then the Turkish Prime Minister, declared that “in Central Asia we are the emissaries of Europe. We are Europeans who are taking European values to Central Asia. We want to remain European.”<sup>323</sup> For Kazakhstan it was a great chance to have an ‘European brother’. It is beyond doubt that the Turkish dimension of its foreign policy would remain a most important one. The Republic of Kazakhstan is not yet able to fully enjoy and emphasize its Muslim or Turkic identity, which—contrary the other Central Asian states—Kazakhstan seems to have more balanced relations. The Uzbek government blamed Turkey for support to its opposition. Turkmenistan builds its system of ‘neutrality’ which seems to be more like an ‘iron curtain’ for its dictatorship. And Kirghizstan, which seems far from having a continuous policy, is prone to regard Islamic countries as a direct threat to its security. Therefore, Kazakhstan might be the only country in the region to conduct a multi-dimensional policy, in which the Turkic and Muslim worlds are among the top priorities of its foreign policy orientation.

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<sup>321</sup> V. Volodin, *Izvestiya*, 27 Apr 1992; cited by Smolansky, p. 306.

<sup>322</sup> Alejandro V. Lorca, p. 63.

<sup>323</sup> Anthony Hyman, “Central Asia and the Middle East: The Emerging Links,” in Mesbahi (ed.) *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p. 258.

## 2. Kazakhstan and the ECO countries

Another important organization that emphasized Kazakhstan's ethnic and religious features along with the Turkic Summits was its participation in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The ECO, a development-oriented, economic remnant of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), the military grouping of the pro-Western Middle Eastern states<sup>324</sup>, was revived by its members, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, to encompass the newly independent Muslim states of the former USSR and Afghanistan.<sup>325</sup> The ECO encompasses a population of some 300 million people,<sup>326</sup> which is greater than that of the CIS. Enlargement of the ECO occurred because of the need of member states for greater support from the international community. For example, the West alienation of Iran for its support of radical Islamism, Pakistan is need for support for its strife with India and its nuclear weapons programs. Turkey for its Kurdish and Cyprus problems, moreover, all motivated attempts to gain greater international support, former Soviet states and Afghanistan sought any kind of external partners. In economic aspects, close cooperation between these countries especially in the field of transportation, could facilitate economic development in the region. As Kemal Karpat has noted, "ECO membership opened the way for the new states to reincorporate themselves into the Islamic Middle Eastern world to which they belonged for millennia."<sup>327</sup> But initially Kazakhstan seemed cautious about emphasizing its Islamic identity because of Russia and Russians in Kazakhstan. Therefore, Kazakhstan participated the ECO session at Teheran in February 1992 only as an observer, while Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan had already expressed their will to join the

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<sup>324</sup> Anthony Hyman, "Central Asia's Relations with Afghanistan and South Asia," in Ferdinand (ed.), pp. 91-92.

<sup>325</sup> Anthony Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics," in Max Beloff (ed.), *Beyond the Soviet Union: The Fragmentation of Power*, Aldershot, 1997, p. 203.

<sup>326</sup> Anthony Hyman, "Central Asia and the Middle East: The Emerging Links," in Mesbahi (ed.), *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, pp. 254-255.

organization.<sup>328</sup> Kazakhstan formally joined the ECO in November 1992, alongside with Azerbaijan, the other Central Asian states, and Afghanistan.<sup>329</sup> But again, the ECO could not form a functioning body mostly because of the blunt political and economic rivalry among the leading powers of the organization. Also, it has been said that, because of Iran, the organization could not actively function. Thus bilateral relations replaced the structure of cooperation, although the Investment Development Bank of the ECO—with a fund of some \$400 million—funded several joint projects.<sup>330</sup>

#### **A. Kazak-Iranian relations**

Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) form one of the most important aspects of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and, in fact, encompass some peculiarities and dilemmas, that cannot account for the two countries' official orientations. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran declared Islam as the "sole foundation of the Iranian identity,"<sup>331</sup> while Kazakhstan always expressed its role as a bridge between Europe and Asia, Islam and Christianity, and portrayed radical Islam as a source of regional instability. Very interestingly, Kazakhstan, which is itself severely dependent of Western financial aid, especially that of the USA, conducts a friendly policy towards Iran, while preventing the transfer of nuclear materials and technology to Iran, the spread of radical Islam, and the containment of Iran are among the US priorities in the region.<sup>332</sup>

Kazakhstan has no land borders with any of the regional non-CIS Muslim states and only has a sea border with Iran—making Iran one of its key strategic neighbours. On

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<sup>327</sup> Karpas, "The Role of Turkey and Iran," p. 184.

<sup>328</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 32; and Twining, p. 141.

<sup>329</sup> Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central," p. 203.

<sup>330</sup> Hyman, "Central Asia's Relations," p. 93.

<sup>331</sup> Tchangiz Pahlevan, "Iran and Central Asia," in Touraj Atabaki and John O'Kane (eds.), p. 73

<sup>332</sup> Hunter, *Central Asia Since*, p. 158.

December 25, 1991,<sup>333</sup> Iran recognized the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan and, on January 29, 1992, the two countries established diplomatic relations.<sup>334</sup> Despite the dominance of the Shia Islam in Iran (while most of the Central Asian Muslims are Sunnites) the growth of Iranian involvement in Central Asia was expected to spur religious sentiment in the region. Indeed, by 1992 the number of mosques increased to 5000 while in 1989 there were only 160.<sup>335</sup> But in fact, the statement of the Iranian Foreign Minister Velayeti saying, "Iran's improving relations with Central Asian countries does not mean that we force them to accept our standards. We advise them on the methods we prefer,"<sup>336</sup> is more accurate reflection of reality. . Iran harshly suffered from a policy of alienation by the West, especially by the USA, which envisaged it as a source of regional, or even global instability, and posed an indirect economic embargo hampering its economic development. This American antagonism forced the country to conduct close relations with the newly independent Central Asian states which could be expected to ease its 'loneliness' and provide Iran with economic privileges and advantages, to an extent that would not severely damage the country's 'spiritual' structure. Under these circumstances, Kazakhstan plays an important role in Iranian objectives in the region. It was reported that Iran was interested in acquiring nuclear weapons technology and enriched Uranium.<sup>337</sup> Therefore Kazakhstan, then the only Muslim state with nuclear weapons including nuclear testing sites and research institutes, certainly attracted Iran. Second, Kazakhstan was one of the Caspian Sea littoral countries that possessed huge oil and gas reserves. The new country was looking for a way to transport its natural wealth. Naturally, Iran laid possible routes, which provided

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<sup>333</sup> Carol R. Saivetz, "Central Asia: Emerging Relations with the Arab States and Israel," in Malik (ed.) *Central Asia*, p. 314.

<sup>334</sup> Tokayev, p. 524.

<sup>335</sup> Twining, p. 141.

<sup>336</sup> *New York Times*, 22 March 1992; cited by Smolansky, p. 304.

Iran certain bargaining power: if the pipeline passes through the territory of Iran, this would bring economic and strategic gains. And finally, besides being an important market for Iranian goods, Kazakhstan, with its sizeable industrial and agricultural potential, was regarded as an important regional partner.

For Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Iran was an even more important partner. First and foremost, Iran offers the only reasonable opportunity for Kazakhstan and for the rest of the Central Asia to transport their natural resources and goods to the open sea and world market via the territory of only one country, save Russia. Thus, Iran is one of the few countries that can seriously challenge Russia's 'exclusive' right to transport Kazak oil. Also, Iran is among the major littoral states of the Caspian Sea. Therefore, the establishment of close and harmonious relations with Iran could somehow facilitate the solution of the Caspian Sea legal status dispute in Kazakhstan's favour. It is usually said that Kazakhstan avoids entrenched incorporation in the Turkic world because of the Russian discontent. However, another important objective of such a policy might be the Iran factor: the emphasis on the republic's Turkic identity could cause displeasure in Iran. Kazakhstan also actively participated in regional forums, that excluded Turkey, such as the Caspian Sea Association organised by Iran in October 1992.<sup>338</sup>

Another important aspect that makes the transportation of oil via Iran advantageous is the presence of close relations between Russia and Iran in both economic and political terms, while other states like Turkey or Pakistan do not have such cordial political relations with Russia.

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<sup>337</sup> David Hoffman, *Washington Post*, 2 February 1992; and Peter Grrer, *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 February 1992; both cited by Smolansky, p. 301.

<sup>338</sup> Twining, p. 143

Although the Kazak officials expressed the idea that Kazakhstan certainly would not want to be an Iranian-type Islamic state,<sup>339</sup> they obviously avoid blaming Iran for spurring Islamic extremism. On the contrary, Iran is presented among the republic's respectable partners. As President Nazarbayev has stated, Kazakhstan "takes into consideration special attitude of the United States to Iran..., at the same time this the shortest way to the Gulf and we shall not refuse from it. We are guided not by political motives but the economic interests."<sup>340</sup> Although it still remains insufficient, the volume of Kazak-Iranian trade is in a state of rapid increase: from only \$ 229,000 in 1992, it reached \$ 58,9 million in 1995; Kazak exports amounted to \$ 43,8 million and imports-\$15,1 million.<sup>341</sup>

## **B. Pakistan**

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan (IRP), another member of the ECO, occupies an important place in Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities. Pakistan's developing economy, its geographic location, and population potential make the two countries active partners, despite the fact that Pakistan has no border with Kazakhstan. Pakistan recognized the independence of Kazakhstan on December 20, 1991, and the two countries established diplomatic relations beginning on February 24, 1992.<sup>342</sup>

Pakistan's aspirations to play an active role in the region have been shaped to a considerable extent by its acute rivalry with India: Pakistan hopes to gain the support of the new Muslim states and eliminate the former friendship bonds between India and the USSR. Reciprocally, India tries to prevent further expansion of Pakistani influence and

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<sup>339</sup> "Tehran and Kazakhstan Sign Pacts," *Turkish Daily News*, 30 October 1993; cited by Mehmet Ögütçü, "Eurasian Energy Prospect: Need for a Long-Term Western Strategy," *Eurasian Studies* (Ankara), Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1994 ), p. 77.

<sup>340</sup> "Nazarbayev's View on Kazak-Russian Relations Unchanged," *Interfax*, 17:33 GMT, 2 Feb 95; in *FBIS-SOV-95-023*.

<sup>341</sup> Tokayev, p. 532.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.



the establishment of a “Muslim economic bloc”<sup>343</sup> under the ECO. The development of nuclear weapons by both Pakistan and India seems to facilitate the elimination of an actual war, but in fact, might make other means of struggle, such as economic and political rivalry, more active.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Soviet successor Muslim states brought some advantages to Pakistan making it an influential power in the region and the Muslim world. It is said that the decline of the Soviet system weakened the three main supporters of India and pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan against Pakistan: the KGB, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet military.<sup>344</sup> In addition to the two countries’ strategic objectives, both India and Pakistan were seriously interested in economic involvement in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. Besides the export of goods, the two countries also intended to develop medium-scale manufacturing facilities in Kazakhstan, especially in textile and food sectors. Growing Sino-Pakistani relations, especially in the military field, forces India to establish new of foreign relations, namely with Muslim countries such as Iran and Central Asian states. Kazak-Pakistani relations are still far from being satisfactory and the volume of trade between the two countries has amounted only to \$12,2 million.<sup>345</sup> However, the real number should be greater because of credits and loans provided by Pakistan and a number of projects that have not been implemented yet. However, strategic and economic links are not the only aspects of consideration. According to Anthony Hyman, many eminent Pakistani families claim their descent from Central Asia.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Hunter, p.140.

<sup>344</sup> Hafeez Malik, “New Relationship between Central and Southwest Asia and Pakistan’s Regional Politics,” in Malik (ed.), *Central Asia*, p. 252.

<sup>345</sup> Tokayev, pp. 262-263.

### 3. The Organization of Islamic Conference

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), established in February 1970, and comprising 54 countries,<sup>347</sup> is the most important diplomatic organization in the Muslim world. Beyond doubt, the OIC could provide considerable support for the new republic's independence, while the huge support of Muslim countries could certainly grant the country some bargaining power and to some extent counterbalance Russian dominance over Kazakhstan. Another aspect of the republic's attempts to was the financial assistance provided by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

Kazakhstan, as other post-Soviet Muslim states, was invited to the Senegal Meeting of the OIC held in Dakar in December 1991.<sup>348</sup> The delegates of the Kazak Ministry of Foreign Affairs took part in the meeting only as observers. As Olcott has argued, both Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan delayed their entry to the OIC because they intended to avoid their states to be closely associated with Islam.<sup>349</sup> It has also been argued that Kazakhstan was interested "in economic cooperation with Muslim states but not politics."<sup>350</sup> On December 12, 1995, Kazakhstan became a full-member of the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Islamic Development Bank.<sup>351</sup> Besides providing financial support for several projects through the Islamic Development Bank, namely ecological and medical financing and infrastructure projects, the OIC forum can be considered as an important attempt to gain political support throughout Islamic world. Also the personal meeting of these countries' officials in a friendly atmosphere might help to avoid escalation of problems between neighbouring Muslim states. The

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<sup>346</sup> Hyman, "Power and Politics," p. 209.

<sup>347</sup> Tokayev, p. 667, 669.

<sup>348</sup> Saivetz, "Central Asia: Emerging Relations...", p. 315.

<sup>349</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 32.

<sup>350</sup> Hunter, p. 150.

<sup>351</sup> Tokayev, p. 672.

Kazak Foreign Minister Erlan Idrisov called OIC member countries to summon their efforts in a struggle against terrorism, organized crime and drug-dealing at the Kuala-Lumpur Conference of the OIC foreign ministers on June 29-30, 2000.<sup>352</sup>

#### **4. Kazakhstan and the Middle East**

##### **A. The Arab World**

Kazakhstan's independent state-building and commitment to a foreign policy free of the intrusion and obsessions of the Soviet Union required diversification of international linkages and elimination of certain prejudices. In this regard, the Middle East, or even the whole Muslim world, was divided between 'friends' and 'pro-American' states, during the Soviet period. Beyond doubt, Kazakhstan identified itself as a Muslim state, but the complexity of its relations with Russia and other Soviet-successor states had prevented an emphasis on Islam. The entrenchment of Islamic identity and values could ferment the separatist activities of Kazakstani non-Muslims, mostly Russians. The new country presented itself as a "bridge between the Islamic East and the Christian West,"<sup>353</sup> in order to avoid any tension, but also permitted the revival of Islamic identity and traditions at an informal level. In fact, it is not easy to assert, as some did, that Kazakhstan's interest in Islam was simply for financial reasons.<sup>354</sup> Throughout its history, the Kazaks identified themselves with Islam. Indeed, clergy had always been highly respected in society. It could certainly be said that Islam was among the primary factors that solidified Kazak societal cohesion. More importantly, Russia and Russians, whether in Kazakhstan or not, started to contemplate social, demographic and even political, differences between them and the Kazaks or other Central Asians—an important reason for the Russian exodus from Kazakhstan. Posovalek, a prominent figure

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<sup>352</sup> *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 27, (July 2000).

<sup>353</sup> Olcott, *CANS*, p. 32

in Russian foreign policy, has denoted the Islamic world as “a belt extending from *Kazakstan* to Mauritania,” (emphasis added).<sup>355</sup>

Kazak leadership commits to a flexible policy towards the Islamic world and craftily avoids casting any blame and suspicion on Islamic countries. President Nazarbayev himself shows up in mosques, albeit very rarely. His rhetoric about Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism is strictly directed against criminal activities, and he never refrained from praising the consolidating and peacekeeping features of Islam. Contrary to other Central Asian republics- Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – Kazakstan is likely to be the only country to commit balanced relations with the Islamic world. Uzbekistan, for instance, cooled its relations even with Turkey, the most moderate and secular among Muslim states, blaming Turkey for supporting Uzbekistan’s ‘Islamic’ opposition. During his visit to Qatar in 1998 President Nazarbayev said that “Astana is the northwest capital of an *Islamic state* in the world” (emphasis added).<sup>356</sup> A great number of mosques, medresses, and Islamic centers were established in the republic within a few years of independence along with cultural centers of some Muslim countries, such as Egypt and Qatar. Recently, a new Mufti of Kazakstan, Absattar Derbisaliyev, an orientalist and Arabist, was elected at the Third *Qurultay* of the Kazakstani Muslims replacing Ratbek-Haji Nisanbay-uli, who served as a Mufti since the Soviet period.<sup>357</sup>

While enjoying its peculiar status as the least ‘endangered’ by Islamic radicalism, Kazakstan seems to be the only Central Asian newly independent state not considering Islamic movements as major opposition to the leading elites and a threat to stability as

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<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31

<sup>355</sup> *Al-Hayat* (In Arabia), 17 September 1992; in *FBIS-USR*, 2 October 1992, p. 49; cited by Mesbahi, *Russia and the Geopolitics*, p. 280

<sup>356</sup> “Mechet’ Velikogo Kipchaka,” *Trud v Tsentral’noy Azii*, 15 June 2000; in IAC Eurasia, [www.eurasia.org.ru](http://www.eurasia.org.ru).

<sup>357</sup> *Kazak News* (E-mail based RFE/RL News Bulletin ), 27 June 2000.

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and to some extent Kirghizstan. On the contrary, religious and nationalistic Kazak organizations, which have been mostly intertwined, in fact to contribute the state's independence and commit to policies ministering national interests, especially by activating public opinion against Russian aspirations over the republic. Upon the escalation of the Azeri-Armenian conflict in Karabağ, Kojahmedov, a prominent leader of Kazakstani Islamic and nationalistic movement *Azat*, proposed to send a Kazak battalion to help Muslim Azeris.<sup>358</sup>

According to Zviagelskaia, political Islam is a social movement reflecting the process of acceleration of social marginalization between the rich and the poor.<sup>359</sup> Amin Saikal has asserted that political Islam has been on the increase mostly because Muslim republics suppressed by communism seek to rediscover their roots and identities.<sup>360</sup> Therefore, autocratic suppression of Islamic movements would certainly make it more active and detrimental. As Graham Fuller has stated, since the collapse of communism "Islamic radicalism is the most 'global' radical movement in the world."<sup>361</sup>

One of the most important reasons that made Middle Eastern Arab countries attractive for Kazakhstan was their petroleum exporting economies that could be an important experience for the young republic in search for the opportunity to export its rich Caspian Sea oil. On the other hand, rich Middle Eastern countries, and especially Saudi Arabia, a country that hosts the holy places of Islam and regards itself as possessing a sacred task to help and protect Islamic values all over the world, were regarded as a source of financial aid. Financial aid from the Kingdom of the Saudi Arabia which has already allotted 15% of its oil income to other countries as financial

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<sup>358</sup> Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad*, p. 122.

<sup>359</sup> Zviagelshaie, p. 12.

<sup>360</sup> Saikal, "Russia and Central Asia," p. 153.

<sup>361</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "Central Asia and American National Interests," in Hafeez Malik (ed.), *Central Asia*, p. 137.

aid, raised great hope.<sup>362</sup> Even prior to the collapse of the USSR, Saudi Arabia provided some \$ 2,5 billion as direct aid or loans.<sup>363</sup> Kazakhstan established broad economic and diplomatic relations with many Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, but still the lack of direct borders between Kazakhstan and the Arab countries hampered the development of broad trade relations, especially for the export of Kazakstani agricultural goods to these states. Among the Arab countries, Oman played a unique role by actively participating in gigantic pipeline projects from Kazakhstan, especially in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, where it cooperates with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Russia.<sup>364</sup> In addition to its economic activities with the Arab states, Kazakhstan attempts to generate an impression of a friendly state and, as a rule, has criticized the use of force against Iraq by the West.<sup>365</sup>

## **B. Kazakhstan and Israel**

Another complex stage for the incipient Kazak foreign policy is its relations with Israel and Palestine, which naturally affects its relations with the Arab states and the whole Muslim world. It seemed that Kazakhstan is aware of the great importance of establishing friendly relations with Israel, which is important for the republic's relations with the West, especially the USA, where the Jewish lobby is very influential. On the other hand, improvement of Kazak-Israeli relations might simultaneously cause the exacerbation of relations with Arab states, which occupy an important place for the republic's economic and political life. Notably, Kazakhstan followed a coordinated and balanced policy toward the region and the Kazak officials have been very prudent and cautious in their every statement.

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<sup>362</sup> Tokayev, p. 563.

<sup>363</sup> Twining, p. 143.

<sup>364</sup> *FBIS-NES*, 21 July 1992, pp. 11-12; cited by Hyman, "Central Asia and the Middle East," p. 261.

<sup>365</sup> "Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan, Ukraine Regret Use of Force Against Iraq," *FBIS-SOV-98-355*, 21 December 1998.

Israel, with its advanced technology and financial opportunities, was an important economic partner for the Kazakstan's weakened economy. In January 1993, the Eisenberg Group of Israel expressed their will to participate in several projects in Kazakstan amounting to \$ 2 billion including upgrading oil refineries, which showed Israel's interest in Kazakstan and its economic capacity.<sup>366</sup> In addition to cooperation in the economic field, the two countries provided some other advantages to each other. First, establishment of good relations with Kazakstan provides an ally for Israel in the Muslim world, which—if not lobbying for its interests—might at least serve as a mediator in disputes with Muslim countries. During Nazarbayev's visit to Israel in December 1995, the families of Israeli military pilots lost in Southern Lebanon and supposed to be seized by Iranian forces requested him to ask Iranian President Rafsanjani to release them. Surprisingly, Nazarbayev kept his word and talked with Rafsanjani on the matter in May 1996.<sup>367</sup> Naturally, friendly Kazak-Israeli relations prevent commitment of pro-Islamic policy by Kazakstan in a way that could be harmful to Israel.

The key point of Kazak-Israeli relations is likely to become the attitude towards the Palestinian state and the Middle East peace process. Dmitry Trofimov has stated that "Kazakhstan is clearly in a favourable position here because of its more balanced approach, allowing it to maintain mutually beneficial relations both with the Arabs and with Israel. In contrast, Uzbekistan has shifted the balance in favour of Israel, a move which is unacceptable for many Arab countries."<sup>368</sup> Contrary to some Central Asian leaders, President Nazarbayev also paid an official visit to Palestine during his official visit to Israel in December 1995.<sup>369</sup> In an interview with an Israeli journalist, Nazarbayev stated that Kazakstan's "approach to the rival sides in the Middle East is

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<sup>366</sup> Hugh Carnegie, *Financial Times* (London), 28 January 1993; cited by Hyman, "Central Asia and the Middle East," p. 262.

<sup>367</sup> Tokayev, pp. 540-541.

<sup>368</sup> Trofimov.

even-handed.”<sup>370</sup> But in fact, the Kazak support for the new Palestinian state has not only remained on paper, but has assumed an active form: on April 6, 1992, Kazakhstan and the Palestinian state established diplomatic relations and Yasir Arafat, then the leader of the PLO twice visited Kazakhstan – in 1991 and in 1993 – when he was received by the President and the Vice-President of the Republic of Kazakhstan respectively.<sup>371</sup> During the last visit of Arafat, the latter stated that “towards the Middle East Kazakhstan has unchanged position and supports the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions No.242 and 338, which stipulates release of occupied Arab territories.”<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Karpas, “The Role of Turkey,” p. 183.

<sup>370</sup> *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 13 Apr 1992, p.18; in *FBIS-SOV-072*, 14 April 1992, p. 56; cited by Savietz, p.322.

<sup>371</sup> Tokayev, p. 585.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*



## Conclusion

The circumstances that encircle Kazakhstan and the Kazak nation, hardly resemble those of any other state in the world. It has a large number of ethnic groups other than native Kazaks, namely Russians, Ukrainians, Germans and others and it is not easy to call them minorities. Throughout Soviet history, and especially during Stalin's rule, Kazakhstan had become a reservoir for several 'problematic' peoples, such as the Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Azerbaijanis, Meshetian (Ahıska) Turks, Koreans, and Greeks. It is reported that some 100 different ethnic groups live in the country and many of them express their displeasure about the policy of 'Kazakization'.

In economic terms, Kazakhstan still remains an energy exporting state that mostly relies on the export of Caspian Sea oil, which makes the republic severely vulnerable to Russian pressure. Indeed, the only existing pipeline system belongs to Russia and passes through its territory. This oil transportation issue forces the country to conduct a highly diverse foreign policy especially to the countries which could play an essential role in the building of alternative pipelines, namely China, Turkey, and Iran. Kazakhstan has built cordial economic and political relations with another Muslim state of the former USSR-Azerbaijan, a country which faces similar problems and could be a permanent ally in further Caspian Sea negotiations.

On the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially after the recent presidential elections in Russia, Kazakhstan has been blamed of discriminating against its Russian population and of conducting a policy of forced 'Kazakization'. Today, Kazakhstan is highly dependent and vulnerable on Russia not only in economic and military terms, but also in terms of politics. The election of Vladimir Putin as the President of the Russian Federation and his neo-imperialist aspirations to establish a new type of Russian governance, warned the Kazak leadership to conduct a multidimensional foreign policy. After Putin came to

power, the criticism in Russian media towards the situation of Russians in Kazakhstan intensified. In addition to demographic pressure, Russia possesses the only functioning pipeline from Kazakhstan. Therefore, it enjoys an 'exclusive right' to control the Kazak economy as it wishes. A great share of the Kazak budget consists of the Caspian oil revenues and the oil sector of Kazakhstan attracts foreign investment more than any other sector in the republic. The Russian threats to cut off its oil transits, which would lead the Kazak economy into a severe economic crisis, forces Kazakhstan to conduct a pro-Russian foreign policy. Any bitter economic crisis in the republic might cause social unrest, and especially among the republic's Russian population.

This vulnerable position caused by the republic's large Russian population and Russia's possession of pipelines, appears as the critical determinants of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. It needs to diversify its policy as rapidly as possible. Land-locked Kazakhstan is not able to enjoy the right to choose its neighbours. In this regard, the establishment of close relations with its neighbours would make Kazakhstan less vulnerable, or at least lessen the effects of Russia's pressure. Kazakhstan emphasises its struggle against terrorism, radical Islam, and drug-smuggling, implying that Russia would face a greater wave of terrorism, drug-trafficking, and radical Islam if Kazakhstan were 'unable' to counter them.

From 1999 on, Kazakhstan activated a process of repatriation of ethnic Kazaks from abroad, thus facilitating their naturalization by Kazak legal organs. During the official visit of the Chinese Vice-Chairman Hu Jintao to Kazakhstan in late July 2000, the Chinese side promised to solve the problem of mass repatriation of ethnic Kazaks to Kazakhstan.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> *Kazakh News* (E-mail based RL/RFE News Bulletin), August 2, 2000.

The Republic of Kazakhstan seems to have become aware of the importance of establishing close relations with the Muslim world. Unlike other regional countries (i.e. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, and Tajikistan) Kazakhstan seeks to establish close regional relations, which could ease the republic's severe dependency on Russia by providing other vectors to lean on in case of Russia's pressure.

The Republic of Turkey represents a unique opportunity for Kazakhstan's cooperation. Besides its developed economy and established democratic values, Turkey is a kin-state for the Kazaks that might link the Turkic republics of Central Asia. More importantly, Turkey could act as the gate for Kazakhstan either to the West or to the Muslim world, from which Kazakhstan had been excluded for several decades during the Soviet rule. Although, the participation of Turkey in Kazakhstan's development is likely to be underestimated, Turkey has come a long way. More importantly, Turkish influence can be perceived either at personal and social level. Deliberately thrown into oblivion throughout Soviet rule, Turkey has already gained its place in the hearts of common Kazaks.

On the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Republic of Kazakhstan became a country that finally found its place in the world community. Today Kazakhstan tries to create a state with its own national interests to lessen the burden of its former ideology.

Despite the recent discovery of large-scale corruption in Kazakhstan, the republic attained quite impressive economic figures raising the country's prospects. By 1997, Kazakhstan held the first place among the CIS countries in overall direct investment per capita. According the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development report, in 1989-1996, the per capita investment in Kazakhstan amounted to \$165—five times more than in Russia.<sup>374</sup> According to the recent figures presented by the Statistics Agency of

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<sup>374</sup> "Kazakhstan: Government Ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in CIS Direct Investment," *Interfax*, 13:32 GMT, 14 May 1997; in *FBIS-SOV-97-134*.

the republic of Kazakhstan, in comparison with the same period of 1999, the increase of industrial production reached 16.3 %; direct investment increased by 29 %; Kazak exports almost doubled (January-May) amounting to \$3.5 billion and most importantly, the positive balance of trade was equal to (+) \$1.708 billion.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> "Statagentstvo otmechayet rost ekonomicheskikh pokazateley strany v pervom polugodii," *Panorama* (Almaty), No. 30, July 2000.

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